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or AWAKENED INDIA

A monthly journal of the Ramakrishna Order  
started by Swami Vivekananda in 1896

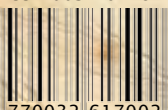


November 2009

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# THE ROAD TO WISDOM

## SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON *Bengali Language*



**S**IMPLICITY is the secret. My ideal of language is my Master's language, most colloquial and yet most expressive. It must express the thought which is intended to be conveyed.

The attempt to make the Bengali language perfect in so short a time will make it cut and dried. Properly speaking, it has no verbs. Michael Madhusudan Dutt attempted to remedy this in poetry. The greatest poet in Bengal was Kavikankana. The best prose in Sanskrit is Patanjali's Mahabhashya. There the language is vigorous. The language of Hitopadesha is not bad, but the language of Kadambari is an example of degradation.

The Bengali language must be modelled not after the Sanskrit, but rather after the Pali, which has a strong resemblance to it. In coining or translating technical terms in Bengali, one must, however, use all Sanskrit words for them, and an attempt should be made to coin new words. For this purpose, if a collection is made from a Sanskrit dictionary of all those technical terms, then it will help greatly the constitution of the Bengali language.

The other day I wrote an essay on "What is Hinduism", and some amongst you even are complaining that it was written in a very stiff Bengali. I think, language and thought also, like all other things, become lifeless and monotonous in course of time. Such a state seems to have happened now in this country. On the

advent of Shri Ramakrishna, however, a new current has set in, in thought and language. Everything has now to be recast in new moulds. Everything has to be propagated with the stamp of new genius. ... Henceforth I am thinking of writing essays in Bengali. Litterateurs will perhaps rail at them. Never mind—I shall try to cast the Bengali language in a new mould. Nowadays, Bengali writers use too many verbs in their writings; this takes away the force of the language. If one can express the ideas of verbs with adjectives, it adds to the force of the language; henceforth try to write in that style. Try to write articles in that style in the Udbodhan. Do you know the meaning of the use of verbs in language? It gives a pause to the thought; hence the use of too many verbs in language is the sign of weakness, like quick breathing, and indicates that there is not much vitality in the language; that is why one cannot lecture well in the Bengali language. He who has control over his language, does not make frequent breaks in his thoughts. As your physique has been rendered languid by living on a dietary of boiled rice and dal, similar is the case with your language. In food, in modes of life, in thought, and in language, energy has to be infused.

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From *The Complete Works of Swami Vivekananda*,  
5.259; 7.133.



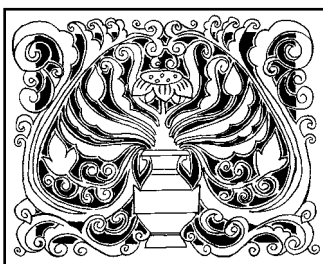
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**Vol. 114, No. 11**  
**November 2009**

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Amrita Kalasha

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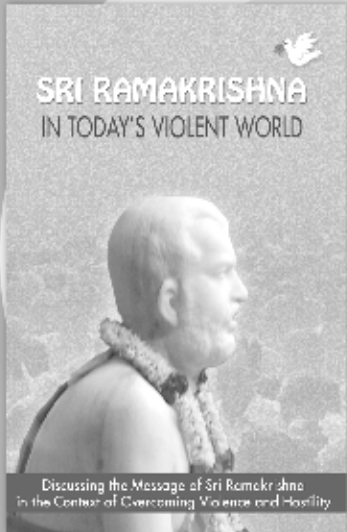
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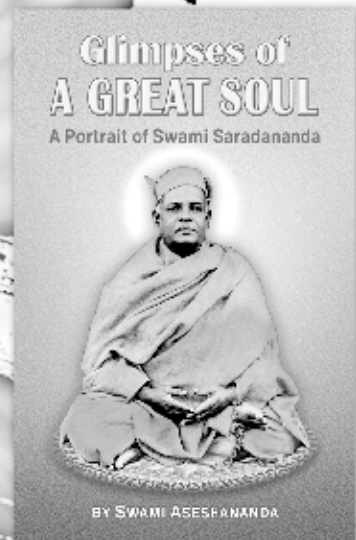
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# TRADITIONAL WISDOM

उत्तिष्ठत जाग्रत प्राप्य वरान्निबोधत । *Arise! Awake! And stop not till the goal is reached!*

## Kavi: The Poet

November 2009

Vol. 114, No. 11

अर्चत प्रार्चत प्रियमेधासो अर्चत ।  
अर्चन्तु पुत्रका उत पुरं न धृण्वर्चत ॥  
अव स्वराति गर्गरो गोधा परि सनिष्वणत् ।  
पिङ्गा परि चनिष्कदद् इन्द्राय ब्रह्मोद्यतम् ॥

Sing, sing forth your songs of praise, sing O Priyamedhas! Let children sing too, sing the praise of him who is a refuge like a castle. Loudly let the violin sound and the drum mightily resound; let the string send its tunes about, to the lord of gods is our hymn upraised. (Rig Veda, 8.69.8-9)

कालो अश्वो वहति सप्तरश्मिः सहस्राक्षो अजरो भूरिरेताः ।  
तमा रोहन्ति कवयो विपश्चितस्तस्य चक्रा भुवनानि विश्वा ॥

Time drives like a horse with seven reins, a thousand-eyed unaging stallion. Him the inspired poets mount; all beings are his chariot wheels. (Atharva Veda, 19.53.1)

प्रतीयमानं पुनरन्यदेव वस्त्वस्ति वाणीषु महाकवीनाम् ।  
यत्तत् प्रसिद्धावयवातिरिक्तं विभाति लावण्यमिवाङ्गनासु ॥

Some other entity is apparent in the words of great poets, something that shines forth distinct from the well-known components (of speech), much like the graces of a noble woman. (Anandavardhana)

I know not how thou singest, my master! I ever listen in silent amazement.

The light of thy music illumines the world. The life-breath of thy music runs from sky to sky. The holy stream of thy music breaks through all stony obstacles and rushes on.

My heart longs to join in thy song, but vainly struggles for a voice. I would speak, but speech breaks not into song, and I cry out baffled. Ah, thou hast made my heart captive in the endless meshes of thy music, my master!

(*Gitanjali*, poem 3)



# THIS MONTH

Sociologists tell us that we are living in a 'post-modern' and 'post-material' world, even though we are yet to see the end of modernity. As we take a look at some contemporary literary traditions in this number, we are reminded that spirituality is an important component of **Modernity and Beyond**.

In **Spirituality in the Pilgrimage of Modern Bengali Literature** Swami Shastrajnananda, Vice Principal, Ramakrishna Mission Vidyamandira, Belur, argues that perennial values have very much been part of modernity, as is seen in the writings of such Bengali writers as Rabindranath Tagore.



Sri Souribandhu Kar, noted *littérateur* and former member, Board of Trustees, National Book Trust, New Delhi, gives us a panoramic view of the **Spiritual and Cultural Ethos of Modern Oriya Literature**, its roots in tradition, and its remarkable dynamism.

In **Cultural and Spiritual Aspects of Modern Telugu**, Sri J Rambabu, Chairman, Andhra Pradesh State Financial Corporation, Hyderabad, records the historical evolution of modern Telugu and the contributions of some key figures to this process.



The **Cultural Ethos of Modern Gujarati Literature**, synthetic, cosmopolitan, and inclusive, is outlined by Dr Darshini Dadawala, Lecturer in Gujarati, and Dr Amit Dholakia, Reader in Political Science, Maharaja Sayajirao University, Vadodara.

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Dr Jashobanta Roy, Lecturer, Department of Philosophy, Radhamadhab College, Silchar, presents **A Note on the Social Thinking of Shankaradeva**, the influential medieval reformer saint of Assam.

Noted Hindi writer Dr Narendra Kohli, of New Delhi, continues his appraisal of **Struggle and Conflict in the Plays of Jaishankar Prasad**.

Swami Bhaskareswarananda, former President, Ramakrishna Math, Nagpur, concludes his exposition of the **Narada Bhakti Sutra** with a review of the essentials of bhakti.

## TO THE EDITOR

This has reference to the letter to the editor published in the September number (page 500). *Nava-pañcavāram* cannot be interpreted as 'five times nine' instead of 'five plus nine', which is the universal interpretation. In his *Hindu Dharma* (Bombay: Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, 1995) Pujyashri Chandrashekharendra Saraswati Swami says: 'At the close of the dance, the concluding beats (*cāppu*) produced fourteen sounds. It is these fourteen that are referred to in the stanza ('*Nṛttāvasāne*', etc.) as "*navapañcavāram*". ... If the number of sounds produced by Nataraja's *dhakkā* is fourteen, the branches of Vedic learning are also the same number (*caturdaśa-vidyā*)' (321).

—B M N Murthy, Bengaluru

# Modernity and Beyond

WHILE reading Kalidasa's *Abhijnana-Shakuntala*, the pioneer Orientalist William Jones—whose translation of this work 'was to take Europe by storm'—wrote: 'I am deep into the second act of a Sanscrit play, near 2,000 years old, and so much like Shakespeare, that I should have thought our great dramatick poet had studied Kalidasa.' Evaluating Jones's translation of *Shakuntala* for the *Analytical Review* in 1790, the feminist trail-blazer Mary Wollstonecraft remarked: 'The poetic delineation of Indian manners and the artless touches of nature ... come home to the human bosom in every climate.' This immediacy and contemporaneity that is the hallmark of a Kalidasa or a Shakespeare has been regarded as a sign of modernity. But the term 'modernity' also has numerous other implications that ancient or medieval poets could not have dreamt of.

Industrialization is the key driving force and central characteristic of modern society. Industrialization, in turn, is closely linked to rational thought and a scientific outlook, and it brings urbanization, secularism, individualism, and nuclear homes in its train.

Rationality and the scientific outlook were hardly West European prerogatives at the beginning of the modern age. What distinguished sixteenth-century Europe from the great contemporary Mughal, Safavid, or Ottoman empires was the advent of print capitalism. It has been estimated that by 1500 nearly 20 million printed books were in circulation in Europe. By 1600 this number had increased tenfold and by the mid-seventeenth century publishers were well engaged in printing vernacular texts at affordable prices for the monoglot masses ignorant of Latin. Knowledge and ideas were being truly democratized.

It is interesting that Emperor Akbar had once been presented a printed Bible and some other printed books by Jesuit missionaries. The missionaries noted that Akbar 'was interested in, and curious to learn about many things, and possessed an intimate knowledge not only of military and political matters, but many of the mechanical arts'. 'Why did he [Akbar] not get curious about printing which would have been of tremendous advantage to him in his governmental activities as well as his vast enterprises?' asks Jawaharlal Nehru. The question is especially important because 'although he could not read, Akbar had a great love for books, and was read to every day'. Moreover, 'he went on to have a number of Hindu texts in Sanskrit and Hindi translated into Persian. ... Copies of such works were distributed to his courtiers, for Akbar wanted to break down barriers.'

No printed book in sixteenth-century Europe could have matched the brilliant calligraphy and illustrations of manuscripts produced at Akbar's court. So it was not unusual for Akbar to show little interest in the technology behind the printed volumes he received. India, however, had to wait till the eighteenth century—when Christian missionaries introduced the printing press into India—before books could become truly popular and thus set in motion the modern era in the literature of its many regional languages.

Speaking at Madras in 1897, Swami Vivekananda said: 'The first work that demands our attention is that the most wonderful truths confined in our Upanishads, in our scriptures, in our Puranas must be brought out from the books, brought out from the monasteries, brought out from the forests, brought out from the possession of selected bodies of people, and scattered broadcast all over the land,

so that these truths may run like fire all over the country from north to south and east to west, from the Himalayas to Comorin, from Sindh to the Brahmaputra. Everyone must know of them.' The structures of modernity ensured that this wish of Swami Vivekananda would be fulfilled in no time.

Modernity involves privileging rationality and 'scientific' procedure over mindless customs and traditions as well as applying technology to address problems of daily living, features that Swami Vivekananda deemed essential for the rejuvenation of India at the end of the nineteenth century. Moreover, on its bright side, modernity is 'dynamic, forward-looking, progressive, promising unprecedented abundance, freedom, and fulfilment.' All these positive elements of modernity are reflected in the early modern writings of industrializing societies.


But modernity also has a dark face. Left to itself, it can accentuate socio-economic differences and aggravate social conflicts. Urban life in industrial societies 'with its tendency to nervous overstimulation, may lead to a bored and blasé attitude to life. It may encourage frivolous and fleeting cults and fashions. It can detach people from their traditional communal moorings, leaving them morally stranded and so inclined to harbour unreal expectations and feverish dreams. In the very number of social contacts it necessarily generates, it may compel individuals to erect barriers to protect their privacy.' These problems were reflected in the large-scale use of Marxist frameworks and psychoanalytic paradigms in modern writings.

With increasing social and economic security, modern societies tend to move into the 'post-material' phase that emphasizes 'self-expression and quality of life over economic and physical security.' Post-materialists tend to give more importance to meaningful work, environmental and gender issues, freedom of speech, and social democracy. The search for personal meaning is also reflected in a greater interest in spiritual issues and the keenness to experiment with them.

The spiritual predicament of the modern mind has been well captured by Rabindranath Tagore:

'When man shuts himself out from the purifying touch of the infinite, and falls back upon himself for his sustenance and his healing, then he goads himself into madness. ... Deprived of the background of the whole, his poverty loses its one great quality, which is simplicity, and becomes squalid and shamefaced. His wealth is no longer magnanimous; it grows merely extravagant. His appetites do not minister to his life, keeping to the limits of their purpose; they become an end in themselves and set fire to his life.' This also explains some of the idiosyncrasies of modern art and literature: 'Then it is that in our self-expression we try to startle and not to attract; in art we strive for originality and lose sight of truth which is old and yet ever new; in literature we miss the complete view of man which is simple and yet great.'

As a corrective, Tagore reminds us that 'in India men are enjoined to be fully awake to the fact that they are in the closest relation to things around them. ... Thus the text of our everyday meditation is the *Gayatri*. ... By its help we try to realize the essential unity of the world with the conscious soul of man.' And such meditation helps us apprehend that 'in the spell of the wonderful rhythm of the finite he [the Divine] fetters himself at every step, and thus gives his love out in music in his most perfect lyrics of beauty' and that 'joy is everywhere; it is in the earth's green covering of grass; in the blue serenity of the sky; in the reckless exuberance of spring; in the severe abstinence of grey winter; ... in the perfect poise of the human figure, noble and upright; in living; in the exercise of all our powers; in the acquisition of knowledge; in fighting evils; in dying for gains we never can share.'

'The truth came to the rishis of India—the *mantra-drashtas*, the seers of thought,' Swami Vivekananda announced, 'and will come to all rishis in the future, not to talkers, not to book-swallowers, not to scholars, not to philologists, but to seers of thought.' He further assured us that 'the time is to come when prophets will walk through every street in every city in the world'. When that happens we would have well and truly moved beyond modern and postmodern times. 

# Spirituality in the Pilgrimage of Modern Bengali Literature

Swami Shastrajnananda

IN the literature of any country, modernism is simultaneously the parent and the child of a mixed culture. The advent of modernity on the literary stage is usually as unheralded as it is in life though, over time, it unmistakably asserts its presence. The passage of Bengali literature into modernity, however, was not a fortuitous event—it required a lengthy preparation whose imprint is distinctly visible in both the national consciousness and the evolving contemporary literature. This period of incubation was most auspicious for modern Bengali, for its creators had the opportunity to familiarize themselves with and make use of the polyphonic chords of diverse literary influences.

Commenting on the temporal features of modernity, Rabindranath Tagore remarked: ‘The task is not easy. For who would determine the boundaries of the modern by consulting an almanac? ... Modernity is not about timescales, but about *marji*, inclinations.’<sup>1</sup> Though Rabindranath’s comment has grown old with time, it is worth thinking over and remembering. None can really claim that pre-modern times reigned till last night, that only this morning the reins were transferred to the modern. Therefore, modernity has more to do with spirit—which Rabindranath calls *marji*—than with time. Changes in the world of human thought sculpt the course for the progress of civilization. It would be unacceptable to ignore the importance of this thought world while analysing the nature of modernity. One ought to enquire how and when an intrinsic change occurs in individual and collective thinking. Old traditions are being replaced by newer cultures. That these new cultures would create a reaction through literature in ongoing societal

formations is also expected.

It is not that all the changes brought about in human thought by the European Renaissance created a meaningful platform for modernity. The European mind had to await the fulfilment of a long historical process that brought about the mindset of liberal acceptance and deepened discriminative thought. Thus would modernity truly foster the liberal and reflective spirit in life and literature.

## The Eternal Charioteer

The sandstorm of contemporaneity, with its fleeting fashions, is often mingled too inextricably with the frame of modernity to be recognized as separate; and many an unwary observer mistakes the former for the latter. However, the attempt to establish the eternal verities that mark modernity leads to conflict. This conflict is as much between the old and the new as between the different strands of modernity—between the ephemeral and the eternal. Tagore has famously said:

*Patan-abhyuday bandhura pantha  
jug jug dhabita jatri;  
He chirasarathi taba rathachakre  
mukharita path dinaratri.*

Rising and falling, on a tricky road, for ages the travellers race; O Eternal Charioteer, your chariot wheels resound through nights and days.<sup>2</sup>

Human civilization itself is this ‘Eternal Charioteer’. While walking its rugged path of rise and fall we reach the eternal, the universal, in the very midst of clamorous days and nights. We must embrace it with alacrity. Otherwise, we might have to pay the price. Each era bequeaths to the next such timeless

gifts as would help keep the people, the community, alive, provide inspiration for growth, and offer indispensable help in their struggles against adversity. Similarly, if we are to look for the character of modernity within literature, it is imperative to discover the timelessness that it leaves behind after its brush with temporality. Of course, the nature of this conflict must also be studied. Analysing the essence of modernity, Gopal Halder, a distinguished contemporary essayist, writes:

We can identify the evolution of modernity through three great historical upheavals: the European Renaissance ushered in humanity's perception of the glorious; the French Revolution established the personal and democratic rights of humankind; and the Soviet Revolution marked the beginning of humanity's revolutionary journey. How far this acceptance of the human being and of human truth has found expression as the voice of individual dignity and national freedom in modern Bengali is a moot question.<sup>3</sup>

The essayist has tried to capture the fundamental note of modernity in the full development of humanity. Undoubtedly, this is a sure sign of modernity. At the same time, it must be remembered that this full blossoming of humanity was never possible in our civilization before the many dimensions of human life—current and the diverse strains of human intention and activity—were captured. The message of modernity which the erstwhile Soviet Russia attempted to project onto human civilization in the second decade of the twentieth century was both revolutionary and unique; but there was no attempt to recognize the diverse strands of human life in this effort. The protagonists espoused a one-sided view. And they had to pay the price for this error before the turn of the century.

### **No Space for God?**

Having reached this point, we now wish to raise a contentious issue. It is a common belief among those who consider themselves to be analysts of modernity, both in India and abroad, that modernism cannot

have religion, spirituality, belief in God, or eternal faith embedded in its character. Erasmus proclaimed that God had died the day before and that today man had been born. Nietzsche announced that old God had finally breathed his last. Personal comments of this nature perhaps lead many to the conclusion that it is this concept of the existence of God—visible or otherwise—that is responsible for retarding the advent of modernity. On the other hand, believers also tend to think that all modernists repudiate such beliefs. This too is decidedly a superstition. Those who tend to view spiritual or religious writings as a separate category and then wish to deny them a place among mainstream literature, lose sight of the fact that spirituality and spiritual living are also facets of human life, amongst many others. It is not possible to view or understand human beings in total isolation from the varied dimensions of their personality. Therefore, if one attempts to circumscribe the multifarious sounds of the atheist's life within the circle of modernity, then the essential world view of the theist must also be inscribed therein. The attempt to discover the character of modernism only in the iconoclastic attempts to break down timeless value-perceptions can never lead to the full apprehension of modernity.

Modernity can be said to have arrived only when the perceptions that human civilization has preserved in individual and collective lives, amidst many destructions, are so transformed as to play a positive meaningful role in the lives and literature of the period. One need not be afraid that, in doing so, literature and art would be turned into instruments for preaching morals. They would continue to mirror all aspects of collective and individual life as before. They would be constructed variously by different protagonists. This is exactly what has been happening in the world, with or without our knowledge, even against some people's wishes. And this is what J A Cuddon has tried to place before us while explicating the idea of modernism: 'As far as literature is concerned, modernism reveals a breaking away from established rules, traditions and conventions, fresh ways of looking at man's position

and function in the universe and many (in some cases remarkable) experiments in form and style.’<sup>4</sup>

This ‘breaking away’ paves the path of modernity in literature. It involves conflict, the attempt to build anew. David Fargacs believed that this ‘conflict within modernism’ helps generate the ‘inner dynamic’ of modernity.

### **The Beginnings**

Modernism in Bengali literature had its beginning in the late nineteenth century. This gave Bengali a variegated hue, which makes it incomprehensible on occasions while it sounds the depths of consciousness at other times. We need to remember that this phase of modernity in Bengali literature is not yet over; its flow is unfinished, and is therefore widespread. This spread often seems to touch the horizons on either side of the stream—the gap being so wide that it becomes hard to bridge the ends. Its treasures are limitless. It is here that our quotidian wishes, *marji*, are being broken and built afresh. Older sensibilities and values are being sought once again; they are being rediscovered too, and furthermore, re-established. What Buddhadeb Basu had said of modern Bengali poetry more than fifty years ago also proves helpful in recognizing the overall modern trend in Bengali literature:

This can be described as poetry of rebellion and protest, of suspicion, exhaustion, and quest; again, the awakening of wonder, the joy of life, and a mental mode that has faith in the principles and precepts governing the world have all found expression in this. Hope and despair, self-absorption and extroversion, the struggles of social life and the thirst for spiritual living, all these streams can be found not only in different poets, but sometimes in the same poet’s oeuvre at different points of time.<sup>5</sup>

These writers were first taken note of during World War I and the years following. Their voices echoed in the pages of numerous such contemporary periodicals as *Kallol*, *Kali-kalam*, *Pragati*, and *Uttara*. Even Rabindranath Tagore did not remain outside its ambit. This new age is captured in

his creations too. In the following sections we shall discuss about Rabindranath and two other litterateurs whose writings set a different benchmark for modernism—one that sought stability amidst disintegration, affirmation amidst negations. The two writers, besides Rabindranath, are Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay, a singularly creative novelist, and Amiya Chakravarty, the first ‘global citizen’ among Bengali poets.

### **Rabindranath Tagore**

Rabindranath was born and brought up in a Brahmo environment. Being the youngest child, he was deeply influenced by his father Maharshi Debendranath. Pramathanath Bishi observed: ‘All the children of the Maharshi were influenced to a lesser or greater extent by the bonds of blood, but this interplay is most apparent in the youngest scion.’<sup>6</sup>

The Maharshi’s personal love for the Upanishads helped create a spiritual atmosphere in the Tagore family. Rabindranath wrote: ‘The writer has been brought up in a family where texts of the Upanishads are used in daily worship; and he has had before him the example of his father, who lived his long life in the closest communion with God while not neglecting his duties to the world, or allowing his keen interest in all human affairs to suffer any abatement.’<sup>7</sup>

The new spiritual and cultural confluence created in the rich courtyard of the Tagore household by the meeting of the pre-Puranic era—through the medium of the Upanishads—and the new road of English learning surely had the Maharshi for its animating spirit with Rabindranath as his worthy assistant. Rabindranath provides profound evidence of being a worthy legatee in numerous songs as well as in many of his later poems, plays, and novels.

It was this atmosphere that nurtured the poet’s distinctive outlook, one that attracted him to the path of an all-pervasive existence in opposition to every form of negativism and sought a meaningful route of perennial faith amidst the monstrous sacrifices of massive destruction that humans were otherwise organizing. Standing by the estuary of a





*Left to right, seated: Karunanidhan Banerjee, poet; Jatindra Mohan Bagchi, poet; Satyendranath Datta, poet. Centre: Rabindranath Tagore. Standing: Charu Bandhyopadhyay, novelist and short-story writer; Dwijendra Narayan Bagchi, poet; Manilal Ganguli, short-story writer; Prabhat Kumar Mukhopadhyay, short-story writer and novelist.*

lifetime of painful experiences he saw that human vice, deceit, and insincerity were indulging indiscriminately in terrible destruction behind the mask of progress and hypocritical rhetoric about ideals. It is surprising that individuals, societies, and nations have all been tolerating in remarkable silence over the ages this insult to human divinity. The famous English poet Yeats wrote:

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and  
everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;  
The best lack all conviction, while the worst  
Are full of passionate intensity.<sup>8</sup>

Though accepting this reality, Rabindranath did not wish to come to an abrupt halt on the dark

banks of despair. He believed that if we were to stand up boldly to those very tribulations which we have been tolerating all along in the hope of peace, then we could surely snatch victory. Human beings must realize the truth through the hardest sadhana; and if while living in the midst of all the countless worldly agitations and enchantments they wish to attain this light of the eternal divine consciousness, then this sadhana is indispensable. The establishment of peace, truth, and goodness is only the external expression of the power of Brahman that is ever within us. In 'Jharer Kheya' (Boat of the Storm), Rabindranath wrote:

I have always seen sorrow,  
have seen sin in many a disguise;  
I see the whirlpool of restlessness  
every moment in the flow of life;  
Death plays hide-and-seek  
throughout the world.  
They float away, move away,  
making a momentary mockery of life.  
Look at their immense form today,  
piercing the clouds.  
Then stand before them,  
and say with a steady heart:  
'I do not fear you;  
in this world I overcome you everyday.  
I am truer than you—  
in this belief will I  
lay down my life; watch.  
Peace is true, goodness is true,  
the Eternal One is true.'<sup>9</sup>

This is an outstanding commentary on modern life. The poet's mental world is constructed in the ambience of the Upanishadic teachings; he does not deny the world, he is alarmed by the terrible images of history, but he looks for solutions on the sure ground of traditional values. We would only be exposing our inadequacy of literary understanding if we were to take this as a device for escapism.

Rabindranath, in his own inimitable style, tried to show human civilization a way out of the uncertain environment created after the First World

War, both at home and abroad. Later on also he continued to highlight the same path on the strength of his deepest experiential realizations. The Second World War began in 1939. The news of the depressing affairs reached the poet in his twilight years. The ailing poet wrote in deep pain on 22 May 1940:

She who enjoys roaming  
the cremation grounds,  
Chhinnamasta,  
(The goddess with severed head)  
destroying in an instant  
fond human dreams,  
Appeared piercing the chest,  
beside oneself,  
Drinking in a hundred streams  
her own blood.  
When this ugly carnage will end,  
in a hideous dance of death  
will this age of sin end,  
and the human being  
in the robes of an ascetic,  
coming to the bed of ashes  
from the funeral pyre  
will sit in meditation  
for the creation of a new world  
with a detached mind—  
Today this call for creation  
is being announced by cannons.<sup>10</sup>

Yet Tagore never despaired in the face of this Chhinnamasta form. With great faith in life, he wrote a few months later, in January 1941:

O Sun,  
Uncover  
Your beneficent form;  
In that divine manifestation  
May I see my own soul  
Beyond death.<sup>11</sup>

In 'Shesh Lekha' (Last Writing), the poem that he wrote on his last birthday in 1941, he greeted once more the uncovered 'beneficent form' of the Sun, possibly for the last time, at the end of the dark night in this human world:

There! The great person comes;  
the earth tingles on all sides  
in its soil and grass.  
Conches blow in the divine firmament,  
the drums of victory play  
in the world of men—  
The time for a great birth has come.  
Today the gates  
of the fortresses of the darkest night  
crumble into mere dust.  
At the summit of sunrise  
resounds the call:  
'Fear not, fear not!'  
in the promise of new life.  
'Victory, victory, victory  
to the ascent of man'  
reverberates in infinite space.

The influence of the Upanishads on Rabindranath's works demands separate study. We have merely attempted to show the foundations of his personal convictions, which could not be shaken by the countless intractable upheavals of the world. How he could remain poised on an imper-turbable inner calm will also become a topic of re-search some day. This too is an image of modernity. Rabindranath's 'golden boat' is loaded with that harvest which will never allow the inner world of belief to be totally destroyed. We may thus spell out the main characteristics of the unique thought world of his literature:

(i) The poet never forgets to write about the negative and gloomy experiences of history; his sharp inner reactions are recorded in the light of these experiences.

(ii) Though diseased times do appear in the poet's narrative, the grotesque symptoms are never so painted as to startle our minds.

(iii) Standing in the middle of the ruins of his-tory the poet wishes to see the picture of immi-nent sunrise on the eastern horizons of civilization. Against the background of contemporary desola-tion, one might have thought of him as unpractical, but subsequent history has proved that the poet's vision has not been futile. The sunrise that the poet

wished to see at the end of a melancholy night did indeed appear one day.

(iv) Rabindranath did not rest content merely with painting the canvas of hope; he invited human beings, all noble minds of the globe, to dive deep in the struggle for ascent.

(v) The unfaltering affirmation of the Upanishads was the inspiration that formed the bedrock of his deep faith in life.

(vi) Because he was enriched with spiritual consciousness he was able to show the path of progress to human society and create a meaningful representation of enduring modernity amidst changing times.

### ***Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay***

We notice a similar artistic mind, gifted with a similar spiritual sensibility, in another exceptionally creative exponent of modern Bengali: Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay. The second decade of the twentieth century was a time of great change in Bengali literature, which for historical reasons stepped into the muddy waters of life. In their fervent attempts at realistic portrayals, the reputed artists of those times started drawing such images which they themselves probably shrank from viewing. Even if we are to leave aside this iconoclastic modernism, it is true that Bengali literature became saturated with the clamour for an overarching realism. As a result, winds of extreme restlessness were blowing over the literary stage every day. Many people could no longer find solace in theistic beliefs. Nor were they willing to see the glory of renunciation in poverty. They began to believe that creation of spiritual and religious literature in an era of humanism and objectivity was a medieval hangover. At this critical crossroads of fragmentary perceptions appeared a travelling artist with a unitary consciousness: Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay. To the starkly realistic environs befitting cremation grounds he brought that sound which is the soul's eternal mate—a sound that, while being extremely familiar, stirs up the deepest recesses of one's being. In no sense did he ever be-

come a writer transcending time and place, but it was by treading the thorny tracks of time and place that he found the message of the country's soul; he saw the unshakeable habitation of the transcendent within the pervasive movie of human struggle. In the words of the eminent researcher Gopikanath Raychaudhuri:

He did not examine the human being by circumscribing him within any particular ideology or situational complication. He did acknowledge the sorrows and wants of human beings. But even then he said that the human is not a puny, limited being; even in the midst of fiery trials of grief and pain his soul remains unconquered. He is heir to limitless eternal joy. His works are resonant with hymnal praises of humanism. He has never acknowledged sorrow as an obstacle on the way. Sorrow, to him, is the special wherewithal for the journey to immortality. His soul, seeking immortality, drunk all the poison born of the ocean of trials and tribulations and held up before ailing and oppressed humanity the ambrosia of faith and human glory.<sup>12</sup>

It is here that we call him spiritual. And it is here again that he is eternally modern. He has carefully constructed a world of consummate faith. He did not make his works the mouthpiece of any so-called institutional religion. Yet, the search for truth within the living human quest, the taste of the eternal-transient in perpetual itinerancy, is found repeatedly in Bibhutibhushan's literature.

In his writings nature appears in an image of firm faith. It is doubtful if any other Bengali writer, before or since his times, has shown the intrepidity to place nature at the centre of their novels. Bibhutibhushan discovered the taste of ultimate freedom in the boundless munificence of nature. At a time when the many images of life smeared with blood and sweat as well as the representations of inner desires and passions of humans were being sought out by most reputed writers, Bibhutibhushan, standing on the same ground as his contemporaries, turned his gaze upon the verdant green earth and unravelled some majestic secrets. It is for this

reason that his perception of nature depicts the joy of the earnest traveller traversing a path that, while dipping into the sea of forms, is yet reaching out to the formless world.

A mantra of the *Aitareya Brahmana* has the command *charaiveti*, 'march ceaselessly'. Those who march endlessly have endless good fortune. Individual and collective human life is a message of perpetual mobility. The song of this march has been played out in diverse tunes in Bibhutibhushan's works. He was not satisfied with the fivefold worship offered through the senses; he knocked at the doors of the expansive mystery-laden world of the transcendent. Bibhutibhushan's apprehension of nature is, therefore, not mere imagination, nor a vision alone; it has nurtured a spiritual intuition that transcends space and time. He is, for this reason, the prime author of the sublime in Bengali literature. The way he manages to scale unparalleled heights in the midst of an apparently mundane narrative is probably familiar to all readers of his *Pather Panchali* (Ballad of the Road). Here he stretches time and space into infinity by the time he sums up the story; and yet an ordinary person holds centre stage in the narrative. The one idea that the author seems to convey to his readers is that limitation is inherent in the human personality, but if humans allow themselves to remain confined within these limits then they fail to realize boundless bliss. Hence, they must march ahead to transcend their own selves. The memorable conclusion of that novel is worth quoting:

The deity of the road smiled pleasingly and said: Foolish boy, my path has not ended in your bamboo grove, under the banyan tree of the bully Biru Roy, or at the borders of the ferry ghat at Dhalchita. Traversing your Sonadanga field, crossing the Ichamati, skirting the Madhukhali swamp filled with lotuses, riding the ferry on the Betrabati, my road has gone ahead, ahead, simply ahead ... leaving homeland for foreign shores; leaving behind sunrise for sunset; passing over the circumscribed limits of knowing, towards the unfamiliar ...

Passing over day and night, crossing birth and death, across months, years, ages, aeons it goes ... moss and mushroom fill up your marbled dreams of life, even then my road does not end ... it goes on ... and on ... and on ... it keeps going on ...

Only endless time and infinite sky listen to its inextinguishable lute ...

I have brought you out of your home by putting the invisible tilak of the wonderful joyous journey along that road on your forehead! ...

Come, let us go ahead.<sup>13</sup>

On reading this passage, many teachers have been known to say that this is a sannyasin's song. But this is not the story of some divine personality, soaked in devotion; nor is it an attempt to reconstruct literature based on some divine personality of Puranic proportions. This is only a journey from the finite to the infinite, an unending quest for the endless.

(To be concluded)

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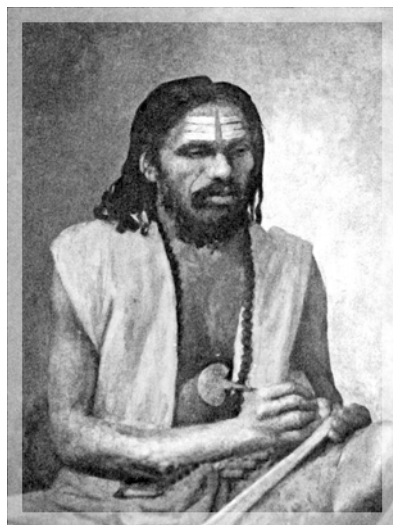
# Spiritual and Cultural Ethos of Modern Oriya Literature

Souribandhu Kar

BEFORE attempting to understand the spiritual and cultural ethos of modern Oriya literature and its distinctiveness, we need to take a general overview of its history, a history deeply influenced by the traditions of Bhagavan Jagannath. Oriya literature was born of the unseen but powerful urge of an isolated and neglected people earnestly wishing to see their own humble and homely thoughts, aspirations, and experiences given expression in an artistic literary way. No other Indian language has had to struggle so hard for its very survival, nor has suffered so many losses through aggressive linguistic chauvinism in its neighbourhood, than the language of the people of Orissa.

Oriya, as we know it today, appears to have emerged with a distinct identity during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the period of Sarala Dasa's epics. The Oriya Mahabharata of Sarala Dasa (c.15th cent.) provided inspiration and encouragement to all his immediate successors. Orissa's dance, drama, painting, music, and literature have all been inspired by such institutions as the Jagannatha Temple, Puri, and the Sun Temple, Konarak. The Bhagavata composed by Jagannatha Dasa exercises, even today, considerable influence on social and cultural life in Orissa. Numerous villages in Orissa still have a temple with a 'Bhagavata room' in which Jagannatha Dasa's Bhagavata is worshipped and recited. Poetry, song, and drama play a predominant part in the festivals of gods and goddesses. As Mayadhar Mansingh aptly puts it:

Orissa ... has developed a pattern of life, art and literature all of her own. Her gods, goddesses and temples, her religious and social structure, her



Sarala Dasa

dance and music have all developed fascinating individual variety of their own which mark them out as distinct entities in similar categories in India. Orissa also displays through her native individuality an interesting synthesis of both Dravidian and Aryan cultures, with delightful assimilations from the life of the tribals, who form not only a considerable portion of her population, but also an integral part of the economic and social life of the state.

After Sarala Dasa, Oriya literature was enriched by five poet saints, known as *pancha-sakhas* or *dasas*, who were deeply influenced by Sri Chaitanya. These five poet saints—Balarama, Jagannatha, Ananta, Yashobanta, and Achyuta—flourished during the first quarter of the sixteenth century and have left behind a body of Oriya writings inspired by a liberating vision and a profound compassion for suffering humanity. Their appeal is enduring because they were written by devout souls intent on the spiritual regeneration of common people. All that is moral, cultural, or holy in Orissa, even today, is most certainly due to the sincere efforts of these *pancha-sakhas*. Their period was named the Bhakti Yuga. Their main objective was humanizing the Divine. Their poetic inspiration and impetus seem to have emanated from Vaishnavism, which also animated the writings of Upendra Bhanja (1670–1720), Dinakrishna Dasa (c.17th cent.), Abhimanyu Samantasinghara (1760–1806), Bhaktacharana Dasa (1743–1828), Baladeva Ratha (1789–1845), and others.

Brajanath Badajena (1730–95) was a major fiction writer in the era after Sarala Dasa. His masterpiece *Chatura Binoda* (Clever Sport) is remarkably modern and carries a tremendous sense of realism. The innumerable *sambhitas*, narrative poems, and *mahatmyas*, eulogies, composed in medieval Orissa had kept the flame of pure mysticism burning throughout.

Among the concourse of many minor voices, two stand out prominently: Arakshita Dasa (d.1833) and Bhima Bhoi (d.1895). Though unknown to each other, they preached identical doctrines. Both were heretical and iconoclastic, openly denouncing idolatry and priestcraft. They appealed to people to have faith in and worship only the formless Brahman. Bhima Bhoi was a blind, unlettered, and poverty-stricken tribal poet who preached the Alekh Dharma, the religion of a formless God—also known as Mahima Dharma, the religion of God's glory—which does not involve the adoration of deities through pictures or images. The wandering tribal poet's pity for the suffering was unbounded. In one of his poems, he expresses the following wish:

Who indeed can bear to see  
Such misery of humanity?  
Let me live in hell forever  
If the world can then be saved.

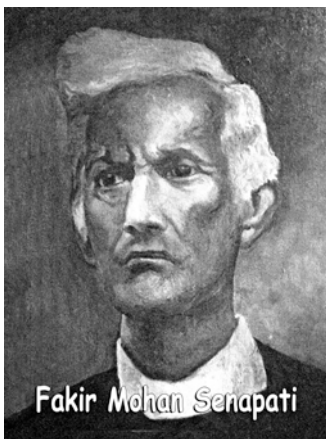
### **The Modern Period**

The British occupied Orissa in 1803. The Oriyas were scattered in four different provinces and had

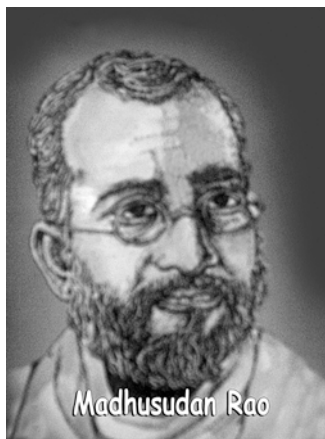
no common culture except the body of writings and glorious tradition initiated by Sarala Dasa and continued up to Bhima Bhoi. From 1803 to 1902 Orissa was part of Bengal, and the entire administration was run from Calcutta. Until 1886, when the great famine Nanka Durbhikhya devastated Orissa, the British authorities had paid scant attention to the region. To add to the miseries, there was a move gathering momentum among Bengalis to abolish Oriya as a medium of instruction. Fakirmohan Senapati (1843–1918), Gourishankar Ray (1838–1917), Radhanath Ray (1848–1908), and many others opposed this intent. Finally, with the support of John Beames, a British officer, and T E Ravenshaw, the commissioner for the Orissa division, Oriya—a language then spoken by seventeen million people—was saved from extinction.

The story of Fakirmohan Senapati, Radhanath Ray, and Madhusudan Rao (1853–1912) is indeed the story of a renaissance in Oriya life and literature. This brilliant trio had many intellectual and spiritual affinities. Working together, these three men of genius ushered in the modern period of Oriya literature in the 1860s.

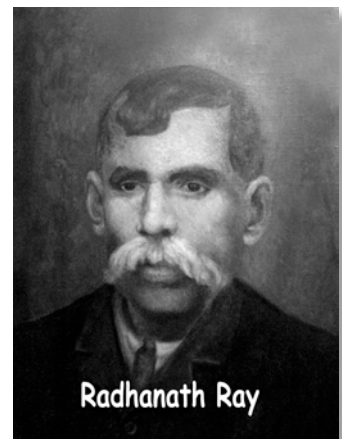
Fakirmohan Senapati wrote novels, short stories, poems, and essays. He also translated the whole Ramayana and Mahabharata from the original Sanskrit into Oriya verse, which became very popular with the educated people of Orissa. Besides these two epics, he created verse translations



Fakir Mohan Senapati



Madhusudan Rao



Radhanath Ray



of the *Chhandogya Upanishad*, the Bhagavadgita, and the *Harivamsha*.

Fakirmohan's novel *Chha Mana Atha Guntha* (Six Acres and a Third) revolves round the character of Ramachandra Mangaraj, a greedy zamindar, and Bhagia and Saria, a weaver couple who are very simple in nature. This novel, though it embodies social realism, is nevertheless animated by a high spiritual quality. It is not merely a story of crime and punishment, but of error and redemption. Fakirmohan's contribution to Indian fiction is comparable to that of Premchand and Tagore. In his short stories *Rebati* and *Patent Medicine*, Fakirmohan focused on the relevance of woman power and women's education, which was later championed by many reformers.

Radhanath Ray is a narrative poet par excellence. The tales he introduced into Oriya poetry were positively new. He relied upon many sources—the mythologies of Greece and Rome, the Puranas, and the oral tradition and history of Orissa. *Chandra-bhaga* is the story of Apollo and Daphne but is based on the legend of the sun god at the Konarak temple. In this lyrical narrative Radhanath's love of nature is reflected as a great spiritual quality, since he saw nature as part of one's own being. Further, for him, pride in the traditions of one's own land is converted into pride in one's own country, into an intense nationalistic spirit.

In *Mahajatra* (Great Journey), which has resemblances to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Radhanath takes the Pandavas from Puri to the heights of the Sahyadri—the Western Ghats—during their itinerary through holy places of India. There, before their ascent to the Himalayas, and having received divine vision, the Pandavas unfold the panorama of Indian history. Through them, Radhanath unveils this tragic history:

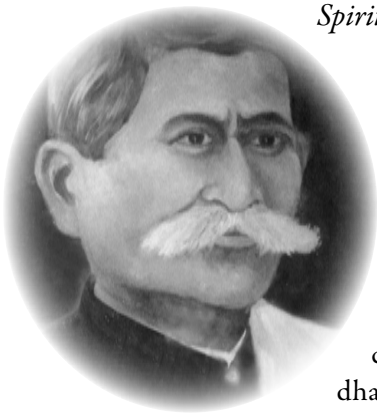
Is this the land of the Aryas? And, are you the sons and inheritors of the land of that noble race? Does the blood of those who refused to part with as much land as can be covered by the point of a needle without fight flow in your veins? ... Alas, who can say why God entrusted this noble land, so wonderfully protected by nature with these

gigantic Himalayas, to the hands of cowards like you? Alas, can it be possible that the jackal enter the lion's den, snatch food from his mouth, and go away, after kicking him, and the lion stand it?

Madhusudan Rao had accepted the Brahmo faith, and this shaped his life and poetry. He is a great spiritual poet of Orissa following in the tradition of Jagannatha Dasa, Arakshita Dasa, and Bhima Bhoi. His songs, lyrics, odes, sonnets, and essays have exercised a significant influence on the Oriya people. One finds divine inspiration working through his poems. His *Rishi-prane Devavatarana* (Descent of the Divine into the Soul of a Saint) and *Himachale Udaya-utsava* (Festival of Sunrise in the Himalayas) are illustrative of such creative intuition. In *Himachale Udaya-utsava* the poet describes the state of mind of a Vedic saint who comes down to the River Shatadru for ablutions in the small hours of a full-moon night. The whole world is bathed in fading moonbeams. The faint glimmer of dawn is visible on the eastern horizon. Behind the saint stand the snow-capped, eternal Himalayas. In this world of mystic light and enveloping whiteness the saint, standing on the bank of the river, experiences the beatific vision of the world-soul penetrating his own self and the whole universe; and he bursts into a grand hymn:

Who indeed are you, O Lord,  
That are greater than the greatest  
And reveal yourself in filling this my soul  
And this vast universe with immortal light?  
Whom do the worlds worship in joy ecstatic?  
The days, nights, seasons, and years  
And moments too, all worship you.

What distinguishes Madhusudan Rao is his ability to perceive beauty in the mundane world encompassing him. His poetry preaches no ascetic withdrawal from a fallen world; on the contrary, it celebrates the presence of the Divine in the ordinary world. Rao, the mystic, was also a passionate educator and social reformer. Like Radhanath and Fakirmohan, he too brought together diverse spheres of activity and worlds of experience.



Gangadhar Meher

Gangadhar Meher (1862–1924) was born into a weaver's family in Barapali, in the Sambalpur district. Though lacking the sophistication that marks Radhanath's compositions, Gangadhar's poems are simple, more musical, and rich in resources drawn from ancient Oriya poetry. His themes are culled from Indian mythology and Sanskrit literature. In *Tapasvini* (Woman Ascetic) the poet universalizes Sita's sorrow and projects nature as a living presence full of pathos and compassion. While Radhanath borrowed themes and forms from Western literary sources, brilliantly refashioning them, Gangadhar fell back on Sanskrit literature for inspiration. *Tapasvini* provides us with a celebrated example of an imagination reworking models borrowed from classical sources. Gangadhar's Sita is no goddess or remote embodiment of superhuman nobility. Gangadhar endows her with qualities that endear her to ordinary men and women, making it possible for them to relate to her emotionally. Gangadhar, like his distinguished contemporaries, contributed to the process of connecting the classical and the contemporary, the human and the divine, tradition and modernity.

Nandakishore Bala (1874–1954), popularly known as *palli-kavi*, village poet, gave a significant shape and voice to Orissa's rural landscape. In his poems, many aspects of rural life found powerful expression. *Kanakalata* is a social novel that depicts the ongoing sociocultural changes from a tradition bound by conservative attitudes to a new and freer dispensation. However, if one compares Nandakishore Bal's poetry and fiction with that of his famous predecessors, one notices a narrowing of focus and a growing inability to synthesize diverse levels of experience. The world vividly portrayed in his poems has little to do with the conflicts and contradictions displayed in his prose fiction. Such

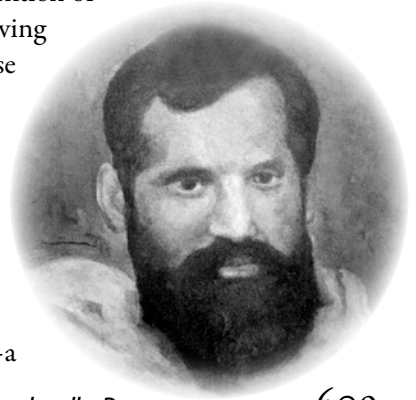
dichotomy began to widen in the subsequent development of Oriya literature.

### **Satyabadi Yuga (1909–20)**

The dawn of the struggle for independence ushered in a new era in Oriya literature. During this period nationalism came to figure as a shaping influence on Oriya writers. The freedom movement brought the Satyabadi school to the forefront of the cultural scene. Gopabandhu Das (1877–1928) and his close associates brought about a tangible cultural awareness which left a powerful impact on literature. Gopabandhu, along with Nilakantha Das (1884–1969), Godabarish Mishra (1886–1956), and Kripasindhu Mishra (1887–1926) became the very heart and soul not only of the struggle for India's political freedom but also of the movement for bringing all Oriya-speaking people together through a common pride in Orissa's glorious heritage.

In many of his poems—such as *Abakash Chinta* (Leisure Thoughts), *Relaupare Chilika Darshan* (Railroad View of Chilika), *Dharmapada*, *Bandira Atmakatha* (Autobiography of a Prisoner), and *Karakabita* (Prison Poems)—Gopabandhu tried to bring modernity into harmony with the cultural tradition of Orissa. One can observe in these poems the poet's agony at the loss of a glorious past, though at the same time he expresses hope and faith in the future. Gopabandhu wrote *Dharmapada* describing the heroic sacrifice of a boy—named Dharmapada—in the interest of his class while he was engaged in the construction of the Konarak temple. In all of Gopabandhu's poems one finds the use of ancient legends with the intention of inspiring people living in the present to rise above self-interest and contribute, through sacrifice, to a larger cause.

One of Gopabandhu's great associates was Pandit Nilakantha Das—a



Gopabandhu Das

poet, essayist, critic, linguist, literary historian, and educationist. Once Nilakantha led the students of the Satyabadi school on an excursion to Konarak. Due to a heavy rain, they halted at Ramachandi, three kilometres away from Konarak. The children were fast asleep. While visualising them dreaming of the Konarak temple, the poet created verses in which he unfolded the whole panorama of Orissa's history through their dreams. This deceptively simple poem actually carries out a dialogue between the past and the present, with a great movement in the background.

Another important writer of the Satyabadi school was Godabarish Mishra. Godabarish too used the glorious past of Orissa as a source of inspiration for the struggle aimed at regenerating the present. He never glorified the past for its own sake; instead, he constantly emphasised its relevance to the present.

The Satyabadi school advocated universalism and international brotherhood, emphasizing the significance of love and beauty. The members of this school strove to link nature with culture, nation with province, past with present. Their best works succeeded in achieving this synthesis.

### **Sabuja Yuga (1921–35)**

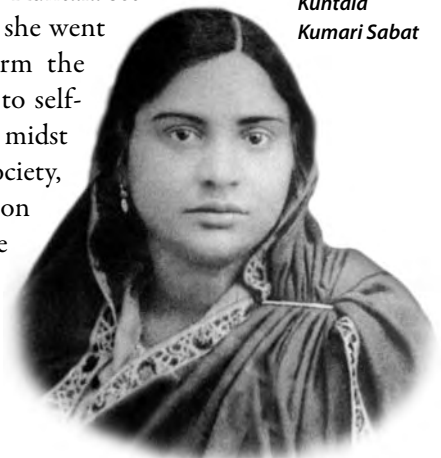
After the end of the Satyabadi age, a vacuum appeared in the cultural life of Orissa and in Oriya literature. This vacuum was filled by a group of young writers who were inspired by the literary movements of Bengal. The pioneers of the Sabuja Yuga, the romantic age, were a few young students of the Ravenshaw College, Cuttack, who formed a group in 1921. They were Annadashankar Ray (1905–2002), Baikunthanath Pattanaik (1904–79), Kalindicharan Panigrahi (1901–91), Saratchandra Mukherjee, and Harihara Mahapatra. These young poets of the Sabuja group were exposed to Gandhi's struggle for political freedom as well as Rabindranath Tagore's mysticism, and were also influenced by the English romantic poets of the nineteenth century. Freedom was what all these young poets sought to celebrate: freedom from social and moral constraints. However, this love of freedom often expressed itself in a desire

to escape from the harsh realities of the world into a dreamland. The attempt to reconcile conflicting and diverse worlds of experience was all but abandoned.

Women writers of Orissa deserve special mention here, particularly Reba Ray (1876–1957), Kokila Devi (1896–1936), Kuntala Kumari Sabat (1901–38), Sitadevi Khadanga (1904–83), Sarala Devi (1904–86), Basanta Kumari Pattanaik (b.1923), and Bidyutprabha Devi (1926–77). They have recorded their joys, sorrows, doubts, and dilemmas in their poetry, fiction, prose, and drama. The participation of a large number of women in Oriya literary culture has enriched it immensely. While these women writers have tried to search for the meaning of life amidst a patriarchal orthodox society and also to build alternative traditions, present-day women writers seem to have drifted from social and cultural realities to a world of individual love, anger, and despair.

The most significant among the women writers of the Sabuja Yuga was Kuntala Kumari Sabat, an activist and *littérateur* influenced by Swami Vivekananda's thoughts. Her writings reveal the composite culture and sensibility of an exile. Kuntala wrote both prose and poetry. *Ucchhwasa* (Emotional Upsurge), *Kalibohu* (Dark Daughter-in-law), *Parashamani* (Touchstone), *Natundi* (Talkative), and *Raghu Arakhita* (Raghu the Orphan) are a few of her works. Her poem *Shefali Prati* (To the Night Queen) is deeply imbued with lyricism and spontaneity. She tried to harmonize her inner spiritual life with the outer world of turmoil and conflict. In fact, the example Kuntala set and the struggle she went through to affirm the right of women to self-expression in the midst of a patriarchal society, laid the foundation upon which the women of later generations would consequently build.

(To be concluded)



Kuntala  
Kumari Sabat

# Cultural and Spiritual Aspects of Modern Telugu

J Rambabu

Seeing its diction, some say it's tough as Sanskrit  
Hearing the idiom, others say it's Telugu  
Let them say what they want, I couldn't care less  
My poetry is the true language of this land.<sup>1</sup>

Why [write in] Telugu? You might ask.  
This is the Telugu land.  
I am the lord of Telugu.  
There is nothing sweeter.  
Because you speak Telugu,  
many kings come to serve you.  
Among all the languages of the land,  
Telugu is best.<sup>2</sup>

QUOTING classical medieval poets while attempting an exposition of modern Telugu literature may appear a little incongruous. But both Srinatha (1365–1440) and Krishnadeva Raya (c.1485–1529) were 'modern' in their own way. Both reflected in their works the lives of the common people of their era. To that extent they were people's poets. Srinatha wrote the classic *Palanati Vira Charitra*, a story of the heroic exploits of local warring families, in *desi chhanda*, non-classical metre. It was a major deviation from the established tradition, as prior to his time only subjects from ancient mythology were thought suitable for the creation of classics. Srinatha is the towering poet of the Telugu *prabandha* tradition. His works continued to influence classical poets for the next six centuries, including Viswanatha Satyanarayana (1895–1976) in the twentieth.

Krishnadeva Raya, the most illustrious ruler of the Vijayanagara Empire, was a great patron of literature and was himself a fine poet too. He wrote his classic *Amuktamalyada* in Telugu, though his

mother tongue was Kannada. His descriptions of villages and ordinary citizens are a tribute to his keen observation and close interaction with common people.

The evolution of modern literature reflects the mood and conditions of the period. As is the case in any evolutionary process, this involves an overlap of continuity and change. And Telugu literature is no exception to this rule. Language is not a mere vehicle of communication; it carries in its womb the history of its people, their way of living, the relationship between groups and individuals, and the overall socio-economic and political environment of a region. Different forms of literature need to be appreciated in proper perspective as they claim to give expression to specific aspirations of distinct groups of people.

Sub-regional variation of idiom—the exact equivalents of which may often not be found even in the same language—gives an additional dimension to language. The other major handicap in any exposition of the type we are undertaking is that original literary works can hardly be presented in all their varied hues and sounds in an alien language. A mere reference to any work or any person is unlikely to make an impression unless the literary work is read and appreciated in its original form. It is also worth remembering that it is structured literature, folk forms, dance, drama, painting, sculpture, and religion that showcase the entire gamut of a regional or national culture. Our interest here would be confined to literature.

## Telugu: Language and People

Apart from its historical antiquity, Telugu also oc-

cupies a prominent place in terms of demographic spread within and outside India. It may not be very well known that, demographically, Telugu is one of the largest spoken languages in India. There is also a big Telugu diaspora spread well beyond the current confines of Andhra Pradesh. Large numbers of Telugu speakers reside in the neighbouring states of Orissa, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka, and there is a sprinkling of Telugu people in other states too. One can also find sizeable numbers of the Telugu diaspora across the seas in Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa, the UK, and currently—mostly as IT professionals—in the US. With the formation of Andhra Pradesh in 1956, the bulk of the Telugu-speaking population was brought together in a single state. This was a historical unification, for after the fall of the Kakatiya dynasty in the fourteenth century, the Telugu-speaking people were never under a single ruler. Even the legendary Krishnadeva Raya brought only parts of Telugu-speaking areas—consisting mainly of the present Rayalaseema and coastal Andhra—under his rule.

It is typical of linguistic and cultural groups to be unaffected by the ascent and decline of empires, as people-to-people contact remains uninterrupted by these travails. For instance, Potana (c.1400–75) and Ramadasu (1620–80) of Telangana were as well known and popular as were Tikkanna (1220–1300), Kshetrappa (c.17th cent.), and Srinatha of coastal Andhra and Annamayya (1408–1503), Peddana (c.1510–75), and Dhurjati (c.16th cent.) of Rayalaseema. This aspect needs special emphasis to underline the cultural and spiritual bonds that united the Telugu-speaking people for several millennia. Apart from the structured output of literature by well-known poets and artists, the living and dynamic indigenous traditions of various Telugu-speaking regions ensured their continued affinity and emotional unity. It is no exaggeration to say that the majority of the devout in Telugu-speaking regions are able to sing one or other devotion-filled bhajan or poem written by Annamayya, Ramadasu, or Potana without questioning their identity and place of birth.

The traditional forms of Puranic *pravachanas*,

recitation and exposition, through Harikathas, the unique form of presenting mythological stories through song and narrative, have kept alive the received wisdom of the great seers of India. Dramatized mythological presentations, mostly inspired by the Mahabharata, are extremely popular among all people of Andhra Pradesh. Similarly, Burra-katha, a form of folk song employing colloquial language, also has immense patronage in rural areas. A secular tradition of ethics and social harmony has been ably presented and upheld by a literary form known as Shataka—a collection of a hundred verses, though many Shatakas do not adhere to this number. Foremost amongst the Shatakas are *Sumati Shataka*, whose authorship is uncertain, and *Vemana Shataka*, which runs into several hundred verses; both remain popular all over Andhra even now. Certain Shatakas like *Dasharathi Shataka*, *Sri Krishna Shataka*, and *Sri Kalahastishwara Shataka* have propagated devotion to different deities.

Avadhana is yet another peculiar literary exercise popular in Andhra Pradesh. In this performance the poet displays his mastery over language and metre by creating interesting impromptu verses, by the dozen, while responding to several scholars confronting him with tricky questions.

### Major Influences on Modern Telugu

Society is an organic entity. Its evolution or transformation is, therefore, gradual and contingent on various factors that impinge on it. Change however may be accelerated by the free movement of ideas and more efficient methods of communication. Winds of change blew over the whole of India in the middle of the nineteenth century when the British improved road, rail, and telecommunications and established a number of educational institutions to subserve their own commercial and colonial interests. This was a period of rediscovery and emancipation for the people of India. It was also a period when a strong urge for freedom united the nation in a concerted movement. A number of reform movements were launched all over the country, which led to a renaissance and

resurgence of indigenous culture.

The people of Andhra received inspiration in large measure from both the West and, within the country, from Bengal. Bengal had hosted one of the first settlements of the East India Company, experiencing thus a long and close interaction with the British and a deep influence of European thought in general. The reform movement started by Raja Rammohan Roy found its echo in Andhra Pradesh. As a consequence, a number of intellectuals embraced the Brahmo Samaj, with its core of pure Vedanta, and undertook basic reforms in Hindu society. The Arya Samaj movement of Swami Dayananda Saraswati prompted the dispirited Hindus to comprehend the elevating thoughts and hidden spiritual truths of the Vedas. Proclaiming every Indian an Aryan and cutting across gender and caste differences had an electrifying effect. Swami Vivekananda's clarion call for spiritual rediscovery and socio-economic emancipation inspired dormant minds into determined action. The Theosophical movement, ably guided by the inimitable Annie Besant, who was also a freedom fighter, resulted in a deeper understanding of Indian scriptures and the spiritual goals they advocated.

The inequalities of a caste-ridden society and superstitious and barbaric customs like sati were attacked. Education was recognized as an essential prerequisite for social progress. Large numbers of the educated elite took up adult education as a mission. Many philanthropic institutions and individuals together established a chain of schools and colleges across the state of Andhra. To provide universal access to knowledge, a dedicated library movement was also launched by such committed idealists as Ayyanki Ramanayya. Literary and artistic forms reflected the mood of the people. The progressive movement—encompassing art, literature, and culture in totality—thus took root among the Telugu people.

Telugu literature has a long history of storytelling. *Gatha-saptashati* is a great collection of stories written by an Andhra Satavahana king. Storytelling by wandering minstrels has also been a popular art

form in Andhra for centuries. The Telugu writers therefore took to story-writing like fish to water as soon as the literary climate became conducive for such an exercise. The literary genre of the novel was alien to India. Early Indian novelists were inspired by the West. Telugu writers borrowed this form initially from Bengal; subsequently, they were strongly influenced by the trends of the Western world. Of all literary forms, the novel and the short story remain the most popular amongst Telugu readers. A large number of notable writers contributed to the development and evolution of these literary forms.

The introduction of the printing press in the eighteenth century by Christian missionaries, and subsequently by the British government, allowed an important break from tradition. It enabled writers to reproduce their creations in sufficiently great numbers and make them available for general readership. Other important developments that helped the literary movement blossom include the evolution of print media and, at a later date, electronic media. Writers and creative artists, who had hitherto depended on affluent feudal patrons, now found a new democratic platform to give expression to their creativity. Feudal patronage restricted creative freedom, as the theme and content had, perforce, to focus on entertaining patrons. The wider platforms of print and electronic media democratized artistic activity.

It is to be noted that the media in itself is not free of bias, as it is created to subserve the political and commercial interests of its managers. However, the emergence of a large number of publishing houses and retail outlets has provided much greater freedom to artists. Literary and artistic associations and educational institutions have played their role by acting as bridges between connoisseurs and artists. The government, in its own limited way, has encouraged creativity by promoting literary and art academies as well as by the regular conferment of titles and rewards.

Besides the novel and the short story, several other literary forms found significant expression in Andhra Pradesh as elsewhere in the country. Amongst them, mention may be made of travel-



ogues—which had been the staple of many readers even before the modern Telugu literary movements made their appearance—as well as biographies and autobiographies, literary criticism, humour, and satire. Various sectorial movements—feminists, dalits, minorities, and the like—have produced a substantial literary output giving expression to their own chosen ideologies and goals.

Several Western scholars helped in the revival and development of Telugu literature and other art forms. One such important person was C P Brown (1798–1884), who served the British government as a judicial officer in various districts of the Andhra region, in the erstwhile

C P Brown, centre



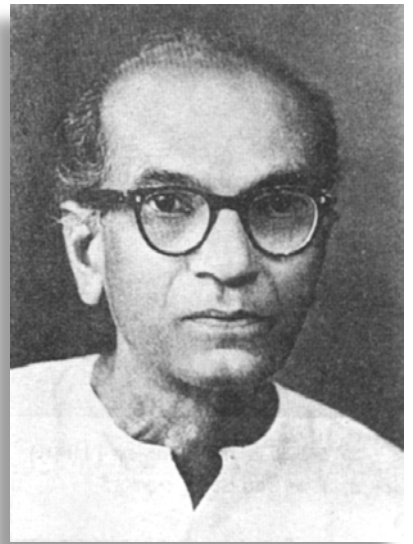
Madras presidency. He spent an entire lifetime collecting large numbers of ancient manuscripts as well as editing and correcting texts as a labour of love—employing several scholars, whose upkeep he met from his own pocket. One famous book brought to light from relative oblivion is the *Vemana Shataka*, translated into English by Brown. Brown also compiled the first Telugu-English dictionary, which became a benchmark for later works of reference.

Mention must also be made of some of the reputed linguists and scholars associated with the University of Wisconsin in the US—Bhadriraju Krishna Murthi, Kothapalli Virabhadra Rao, Velcheru Narayana Rao, for instance—who have made significant contributions to linguistics and to the transmission of Telugu literary products to non-Telugu readers in the recent past.

While recalling the contributions of eminent writers and artists, who were part of particular trends and movements, one should not brand them as unidimensional, monolithic personages wedded to a narrow vision. This is an inherent handicap in describing the evolution of any creative field. Rigid

labelling and pigeonholing has the danger of presenting a partial picture of persons and events.

Abburi  
Ramakrishna Rao



labelling and pigeonholing has the danger of presenting a partial picture of persons and events.

To illustrate the point one could look at the life and contribution of one of the earliest leaders of the modern literary movement of Andhra Pradesh: Abburi Ramakrishna Rao (1896–1979). The list of persons under whose spell Abburi's life and thinking evolved is a veritable who's who of pre-independence India. These luminaries included Rallapalli Anantakrishna Sarma, a great Sanskrit scholar and musician who unearthed the *kritis*, musical compositions, of Annamayya; Sir C R Reddy, an eminent educationist and social reformer; Rabindranath Tagore, with whom he spent some time in Shantiniketan and whom he apparently found to be conceited; the militant freedom fighter Duggirala Gopalakrishnayya—Abburi is reported to have been his second in command during the famous Chirala-Perala civil-disobedience movement of 1921; Hiren Mukherjee, the Marxist theoretician; Humayun Kabir, scholar par excellence; M N Roy, the communist-turned-radical-humanist; and several others. Abburi was well versed in Telugu, Sanskrit, and English; he wrote poetry and could play the vina; he pioneered adult education by running evening classes for dock workers in Visakhapatnam; and he groomed a number of poets and writers including the tallest of them all, the poet Srirangam Srinivasa Rao 'Sri Sri' (1910–83), one of the founder members of the Communist

Party of India and a prominent freedom fighter. Abburi pursued the development of modern theatre with passion and towards the end of his life became a radical humanist and finally a spiritual seeker and devotee of Satya Saibaba!

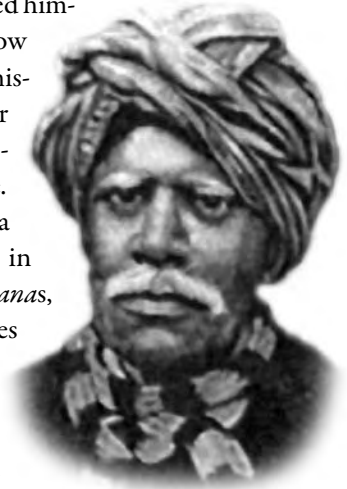
This is a solitary illustrative narration. Many other similar examples could be given to caution readers against stereotyping, which presents a static view of the world of creativity. The avowed agnostic Gudipati Venkatachalam (1894–1979), popularly known as ‘Chalam’, created a storm with explicit erotic narrations while waging a war against the exploitation of women in the conservative society of his time. In later life he metamorphosed into an intensely spiritual person by seeking solace in the illuminating company of Sri Ramana Maharshi. Gajjala Malla Reddy, a gifted self-taught writer, journalist, and lifelong Marxist who sacrificed all in the Communist cause, became disillusioned with Marxism in old age and moved close to the Ramakrishna movement and to Buddhism. The renowned thinker, writer, and artist Sanjiva Dev spent some years of his formative life at Advaita Ashrama, Mayavati. He remained a seeker of Truth all his life. Even Rachakonda Viswanatha ‘Ravi’ Sastri, one of the greatest short-story writers wedded to Marxism, believed in astrology and turned to a spiritual guru, Sri Sivananda Murthy, towards the end of his life. Spiritualism is clearly a parallel stream running by the side of Marxism and materialism all through the modern literary movement.

### Modern Masters

The evolution of modern Telugu poetry was decisively affected by the Western influence on the Andhra elite, who were able to appreciate the prevailing trends of Western literature because of their Western education. Several philosophical and art movements that originated in the West—romanticism, existentialism, symbolism, imagism, surrealism, rationalism, stream of consciousness, dialectic materialism, and the like—had direct and discernable influence on modern Telugu poetry.

Three literary giants are unanimously acknowl-

edged as persons who laid the firm foundation of modern Telugu literature. They are Kandukuri Viresalingam (1847–1919), Gurajada Appa Rao (1861–1916), and Rayaprolu Subba Rao (1892–1984). Viresalingam was essentially a social reformer influenced deeply by the Brahmo Samaj. He used literature as a tool to effectively further his reform movement. He committed himself to the cause of widow remarriage as a lifelong mission and provided shelter to a large number of destitute widows in his home. He is acknowledged as a pioneer in the writing, in Telugu, of dramas, *prahasanas*, comedies, epics, histories of Telugu poets, and of several other modern literary genres. He was also the first to introduce the novel as a literary format for narrating an interesting story. In writing poetry, however, Viresalingam employed the classical metrical style. His was a many-sided personality that contributed substantially not only to literature but also to the transformation of Andhra society into a progressive entity.



Kandukuri Viresalingam

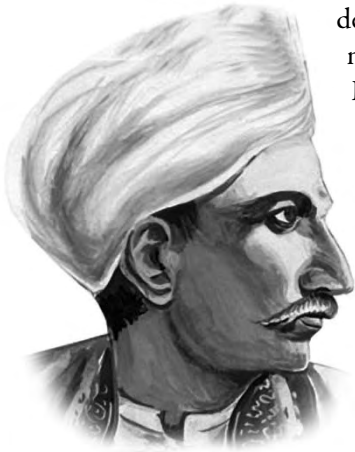
While the place of Kandukuri Viresalingam as a social reformer and scholar is beyond dispute, the real credit for introducing modernity into Telugu literature goes to Gurajada Appa Rao and Rayaprolu Subba Rao. Their appearance on the literary scene coincided with a movement led by Gidugu Ramamurti (1863–1940), which propounded the use of *vyavaharika bhasha*, spoken language, in literature in place of the less intelligible and more Sanskritized *granthika bhasha*, old literary Telugu. Rayaprolu had part of his education at Shantiniketan under Rabindranath Tagore, whose influence on his works is obvious from the kind of subjects he chose for his poetry and the lyrical language he employed. Rayaprolu composed his poems both in classical metre and free verse. He chose to write on romance, *sans*

excessive eroticism, patriotism and regional glory, and the beauty and grandeur of nature. Some of his exhortatory patriotic songs were extremely popular. They were invariably sung in all major gatherings in pre-independence Andhra. One particular verse remains widely popular even today:

To whichever country you go,  
and wherever you place your feet,  
Whatever honour you get,  
and whatever people say,  
Praise Bharati, your motherland,  
Hold aloft your nation's (full) honour.<sup>3</sup>

Rayaprolu was never tired of reminding the Telugu people of the antiquity and past glory of their culture. As a great scholar and teacher, and an ennobling source of inspiration, he groomed several scholars and creative artists of later years. His was a contribution of lasting value.

Gurajada Appa Rao was dewan at the court of the maharaja of Vizianagaram. He had mastery over Telugu, Sanskrit, and English. Unlike Viresalingam and Rayaprolu, Gurajada was more radical in creating a new idiom in poetry which conveyed a larger universal and humane picture of the individual. Even while urging people to be patriotic, he was far ahead



Gurajada Appa Rao

of his time in thinking of and imagining humankind as a collective whole:

Love your country my brother  
And enrich the goodness in the world!  
Forsaking empty words  
Think of doing something enduringly good! ...

The nation is not merely the soil  
Nation is people! ...

What does it matter if a religion is different  
Once all people become one in mind;  
When the nation awakens and grows  
It shines in the world.<sup>4</sup>

Gurajada was a great visionary with a deep commitment to social reform. His magnum opus *Kanyashulka* (Bride Price), a long stage play, is a brilliant portrayal of the social conditions of his day. Though *kanyashulka*, dowry, is much less in vogue now, the characters in the play, and their interplay, continue to be relevant and true to life. The play has been compared to Shudraka's ancient Sanskrit drama *Mrichchhakatika* (Little Clay Cart). Though outwardly the play appears to be a comedy, the subject dealt with is serious and contemporary. The characters in the play, irrespective of their standing in society—be it a courtesan, an inebriate fool, a lowly constable, or a pseudo-ascetic known for trickery—present a snapshot of the whole of society. Gurajada's works remain a perennial source of inspiration for all poets and writers, notwithstanding their diverse persuasions.

After Gurajada Appa Rao and Rayaprolu Subba Rao, the literary movements split into several streams. Initially, the trend set by them proved a major influence on eminent writers of the day: Viswanatha Satyanarayana, Basavaraju Appa Rao (1834–1933), Adivi Bapiraju (1895–1952), Vedula Satyanarayana Sastri (1900–76), Devulapalli Krishna Sastri (1897–1980), Sistla Umamaheswara Rao (1898–1965), Bairagi Aluri (1925–79), Nanduri Subba Rao (1895–1957), Sri Sri, and many others. All of them, in the beginning in their own unique styles, were participants in what is known as a movement in *bhava-kavitva*, lyric poetry dealing with romance, reform, society, and nature. Both classical metre and free verse were employed with gusto in this genre.

A vast volume of classical poetry also emerged during this period. There was also Nanduri Subba Rao's orchestration of folk style in his popular *Yenki Patalu* (Songs of Yenki), which highlights the ideal love between two simple lovers, Yenki and Naidu-bava, in a bucolic environment. Gurram Jashuva

(1895–1971), while touching upon several other subjects, has brought to centre stage the cruelty of the caste system and the inhumane practice of untouchability prevalent in Hindu society, of which he himself was a victim. He used his pen as an effective weapon to wage war against the inequities of a hierarchical and insensitive Hindu society. Poets like Tummala Sitaramamurthy Choudhari (1901–90) and Duvvuri Rami Reddy (1894–1949) called attention to the rural atmosphere, projecting the tiller as the hero of their literary works. There were simultaneous exercises apace in classical metre, covering new ground, with the famous *kavulu*, twin poets—Tirupathi-Venkata Kavulu, Venkata-Parvathisa Kavulu, and Pingali-Katuri Kavulu—as also Nayani Subba Rao and Ramaswami Choudhari providing important innovations.

### **Sri Sri the Colossus**

The iconic poet Srirangam Srinivasa Rao, popularly known as ‘Sri Sri’, is the fulcrum around which the entire modern literature of Andhra revolves. No discussion of progressive poetry is complete without a mention of Sri Sri and his works. He is hailed as the Telugu poet of the twentieth century and many of his ardent admirers affirm that he is truly the poet of the millennium! For a genius who inspired, and an activist who lived his ideology, such superlatives may not be inappropriate. Even his worst detractors cannot ignore his original contribution to the world of letters. His mastery over language was as thorough as was his commitment to the oppressed and to the Marxist utopia.

Like his contemporaries Krishna Sastri and Viswanatha, Sri Sri was part of the lyric movement. It was Abburi Ramakrishna Rao who introduced him to Marxism and to modern Western poetry. Puripanda Appala Swami was another person who inspired him to break away from the contemporary trend.

Surprisingly, by his own admission, Sri Sri did not have a thorough understanding of Marxism when he produced his famous collection of poems *Mahaprasthanam* (Great Journey). The energetic structure, the inimitable new idiom, the electri-



**Srirangam  
Srinivasa Rao**

fying imagery, the underlying passion for the release of the underprivileged from the shackles of socio-economic bondage, and above all a firm belief in the inevitability of the dawn of a new era of equitable and egalitarian social living, free from exploitation, marks him out as a visionary and a creative genius rolled into one. He broke free of the constrictive features of grammar and imparted new meanings to classical phrases. He made mythological images and Sanskritized phrases sound like the colloquial expressions of common people. He thus brought the celestial language of the unapproachable skies down to earth and transformed the otherworldly *devabhasha* Sanskrit into a handmaiden of all. Though a lifelong adherent to Marxist idealism, he was incapable of standing violence. Essentially a humanist, he believed that Marxism was the most humanistic ideology.

*(To be concluded)*

### **Notes and References**

1. Srinatha, *Bhimakhandamu*; trans. Velcheru Narayana Rao.
2. Andhra Vishnu addressing Krishnadeva Raya, the sixteenth-century poet emperor of Vijayanagara, in his Telugu epic *Amuktamalyada*; trans. Velcheru Narayana Rao.
3. Rayaprolu Subba Rao, ‘Janmabhumi’ (Motherland); trans. A Viswam.
4. Gurajada Appa Rao, ‘Desabhakti’ (Patriotism); translation mine.

# Cultural Ethos of Modern Gujarati Literature

Dr Darshini Dadawala and Dr Amit Dholakia

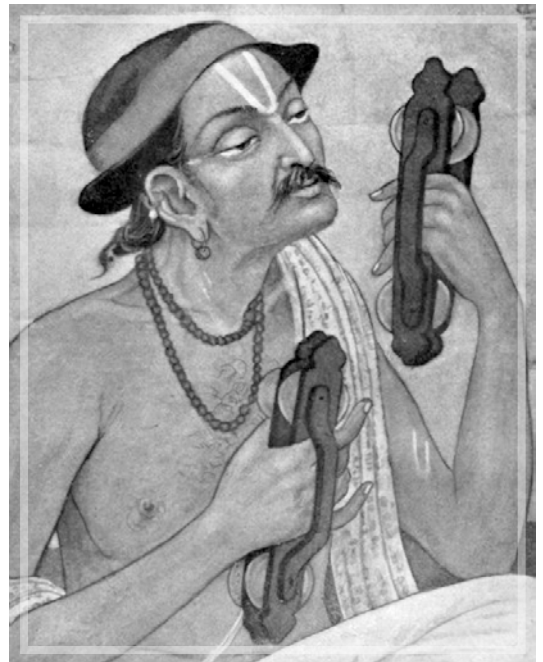
CULTURE, as a way of life and as a realm of beliefs, ideas, and practices, shares a symbiotic relationship with language and arts. Being a linguistic and artistic creation, literature also emerges from the womb of, and in response to, specific social and cultural conditions. Its warp and woof represents the social consciousness of the times. Though most literature reproduces the prevalent cultural temper, it is the destiny of some powerful literary works to be able to actually shape the cultural practices of a given society. As a result, the study of the literary creations of different historical spans can act as a useful guide to the evolution of the cultural consciousness of a particular region or society. The present article, therefore, endeavours to sketch out the cultural ethos of modern Gujarati literature within the larger context of the sociocultural development of Gujarat during the modern period.

Gujarati is a major Indo-Aryan language spoken by more than fifty million people—mainly in the west Indian state of Gujarat and its surrounding regions, but also by a significant number of people in other parts of the world to which ethnic Gujaratis have migrated and where they have settled. It is one of the oldest languages of India, with a history dating back to the eleventh century. Though it has primarily descended from Sanskrit, during its long period of evolution through the medieval and modern ages it has found itself influenced by Rajasthani, Arabic, Persian, Urdu, Portuguese, and English as a result either of social proximity or the rule of people speaking these languages. Gujarati has liberally adopted much of their vocabulary, usages, and literary forms. Due to its extensive history

and shifting nature, the boundaries of the Gujarati language and its literature have remained undemarcated and contested. Hence, the full gamut of Gujarati literature also encompasses, in addition to its classical works, the creations of various dialects and folk expressions.

## **Bhakti Yug**

Oral and written narratives in Gujarati have existed for the past eight centuries. The first grammar of the language was produced in the twelfth century by the noted Jain monk and scholar Hemchandra Suri (1088–1172). Though some Jain monks had earlier written devotional verses called *rasas* and *phagus*, recognition for the first standard Gujarati literary creations goes to the famous poet Narasinh Mehta (1414–80). Narasinh is conventionally



Narasinh  
Mehta

regarded as the father of Gujarati poetry and as the foremost representative of Gujarati literature of the Bhakti Yug (Age of Devotion), which lasted roughly from the fifteenth century to the eighteenth. Though his poems seem to reflect the deep sentimentalism of the Krishna-bhakti cult of Vallabhacharya, there also exists a strong mystical and Advaitic orientation in his philosophy. Following Narasinh, several notable poets in the Hindu and Jain traditions took to the writing of devotional poetry and invented multiple forms—*garbo*, *garbi*, *pad*, *padyavarta*, *chhappo*, and *akhyān* among others—as expressions of spiritual sentiments and religious worship. Notable among these devotional poets were Bhalan (1405–81), Padmanabh (c.15th cent.), Mirabai (1499–1577), Akho (1591–1656), Premanand (1649–1714), Pritam (c.18th cent.), Bhojo (1785–1850), Muktanand (1761–1830), Shamal Bhatt (1718–65), Sahajanand Swami (1781–1830), and Dayaram (1777–1853). The Ramayana, Mahabharata, and Bhagavata formed the backdrop for the literature of this era. Muslim rule also accentuated the desire of the Bhakti Yug poets to assert their spiritual roots in their creations.

The transition of Gujarati literature from the Bhakti Yug to modernity is a process of diverse causes and far-reaching consequences. The concept of modernity has been one of the most contested subjects in historical and social scientific discourse. There are varying, and at times divergent, interpretations of the meaning and characteristics of modernity and the time frame that sets it off. Indeed, each society and nation has undergone its own unique process of initiation and progress into modernity through special historical and social circumstances. Moreover, the period that marks the beginning of modernity is also not common to all societies. While the modern age, in the philosophical and intellectual sense, is believed to have set in by the beginning of the seventeenth century in Europe, it had much belated beginnings in other parts of the world. The impact of the modern age also varied widely in Western and non-Western societies.

Therefore, it is essential to identify the specific context of modernity in Gujarati literature before dwelling on its cultural ethos. The period when modernity had its beginning in India was one of enormous tumult and change in the political, economic, social, and moral spheres. Gujarat was not isolated from these trends and the resultant social consciousness. In the historiography of Gujarati literature, the term ‘modern’ refers to the entire corpus of literary writings produced after the fundamental political and social turn in the wake of the establishment of the British rule and the spread of cultural renaissance and social reformation. This period, from the early nineteenth century till India’s independence, was shaped as much by the spread of nationalism and Gandhian ideas as by the colonial impact.

The East India Company first established its base at Surat in 1614. However, it took more than two hundred years for it to bring Gujarat under its full political control. It was in 1818 that the rule of the Peshwas was replaced by the rule of the East India Company through paramountcy arrangements and subsidiary alliances. From 1818 to 1947 most of present-day Gujarat was under British rule, either through agreements with scores of princely states or under direct British control within the Bombay presidency. British rule profoundly affected the ideology of rulers as well as social customs, lifestyle, food habits, collective norms, personal values, the education system, and economic activities.

Shortly after the British occupation of the region, the British administrator Alexander Forbes carried out an extensive exploration into the Gujarati language, culture, and literature of the previous thousand years and collected a large number of manuscripts. He also provided active support to Gujarati reformers and littérateurs. English education brought the Gujarati youth into contact with Western literature and cultural influences. The winds of reformist thinking blowing in other parts of India, particularly the monotheistic and progressive ideology of the Brahmo Samaj and the Prarthana Samaj in Bengal and Maharashtra



respectively, made an impact on the learned sections of Gujarati society. Ignorance, superstition, backwardness of the caste system, and oppressive social customs like sati and infanticide came under scrutiny.

### Sudharak Yug

Literature is influenced by the social and political context of its time. In a way, it becomes a representation of contemporary ideology, values, and historical tenor. Alongside larger national and local processes, Gujarati literature of the nineteenth century experienced qualitative change in its forms, expressions, themes, and purposes. The first major phase of modern Gujarati literature is known as the Sudharak Yug (Reformist Age), lasting roughly from 1845 to 1885. Dalpatram Dahyabhai Kavi (1820–98), Narmadashankar Lalshankar Dave (1833–86)—popularly known as ‘Narmad’—Navalram Pandya (1836–88), Nandshankar Mehta (1835–1905), and Karsandas Mulji (1832–75) were the chief literary figures of this age. Most of them were wedded to the mission of ridding the decadent culture around them of oppressive social customs through the literary medium.

*Dalpatram Dahyabhai Kavi  
memorial at Ahmedabad*



Their mission was facilitated by the development of printing technology, which presented the possibility to mass-produce literary texts. The first printing press in Gujarat was established in Surat in 1820 by Christian missionaries. The publication of several newspapers and magazines profoundly changed the world of writing in Gujarat. In particular, it gave a fillip to prose writing, which had enjoyed extremely limited support in the pre-modern period. Literary prose in Gujarati truly began in the nineteenth century.

The literature of this era attempted to inspire a positive transformation in society by highlighting themes like widow remarriage, prohibition of child marriage, importance of modern school education, spread of women's literacy, respect for all religions, reduction of the superfluous expenses of social ceremonies, encouragement of local craft industries to retain the wealth of India, service to the poor, and so forth. Dalpatram provided a bridge between the medieval and modern ages in Gujarati literature. For instance, his work *Ven Charitra* (The Personality of Ven) depicts the tragedy of a widow's life and advocates widow remarriage. He also edited a journal entitled *Buddhi Prakash* (Light of the Intellect) to disseminate the ideas of enlightenment in an age of irrationality and superstition. His essays and satires ridicule astrology and popular opposition to machine industry.

Perhaps Narmad represents the reformist spirit of his time more eloquently than any other writer. Not surprisingly, he was applauded as ‘Samay Vir’ (Hero of the Age) by his admirers. He went a step ahead of Dalpatram and became an activist and a pioneer of social reform in Gujarat. He even set an example of his commitment by marrying a widow himself. He founded and presided over a youth organization and published a magazine named *Dandio* (Sticks) to mobilize people of Gujarat for religious and social reform. He thundered in one of his addresses delivered at Bhuleshwar, Mumbai:

You Hindus have never thought of the advantages of getting united in an association. You have never

taken up reformist tasks. ... You have never dreamt of making the country renowned by creating employment through factories. ... What is your right as human beings? What is your policy of dealing with one another, with your family, with your relatives? What rights does the present government have over you? ... What is the good of your country? What is love for one's own country? ... Cultivate courage and use the sword of intelligence and reason.

Notwithstanding his passionate criticism of Hindu society and his admiration for British customs, Narmad supported a return to one's own traditional values—'swadharma' as he called it—towards the later part of his life.

Nandshankar Mehta, who in 1866 wrote the first Gujarati novel, titled *Karanghelo* (Crazy Karan), to exhort people to pursue newer ideas and values, is another notable writer of this age who dealt with the issue of Hindu social reform in the light of ethics and philosophy.

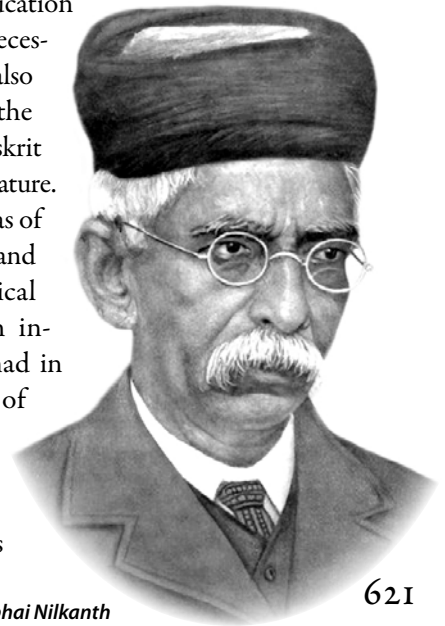
As in many other places, in Gujarat too the British rule encouraged conversion to Christianity with the support of missionary institutions. Such conversion of the historically deprived classes was motivated by their desire not to antagonize the ruling class and to gain a dignified place in society. As concerned intellectuals, however, most of the nineteenth-century reformist writers argued for altering unjust social practices and modernizing age-old beliefs in order to live a comfortable life over pursuing the route of conversion. These writers also used their creations to compare Indian and European societies and the values they lived by in order to promote an understanding between the two cultural models. Their prose and poetry engaged readers in exploring which values and changes from the West were to be assimilated and which were to be disallowed. During this period of cultural transition in Gujarat, the cultivation of such a balanced understanding of the Indian and Western cultures was a major contribution made by the authors of the era.

The spiritual and religious ethos of medieval

bhakti literature was gradually replaced in the Reformist Age by subjects revolving round social reform, romance, and the role of machinery in shaping social life, to mention a few. The medieval *littérateur* was a devotee whereas the modern writer was a socially committed reformer. In some ways, modern Gujarati literature is a product of the dialogue between the self and society, of a shift from the predominantly devotional creations divorced from the surrounding social context to a literature of deep social commitment. Without challenging the spiritual purposes of the literature of the earlier era, the modern writers enlarged its purview and agenda.

### **Pandit Yug**

The Reformist Age was followed by the Pandit Yug (Scholastic Age). This period, spanning from 1885 to 1920, is also known as the golden age of Gujarati literature and culture because of its voluminous production of literary texts and adoption of newer literary forms. Govardhanram Tripathi (1855–1907), Manilal Nabhubhai Dwivedi (1858–98), Anandshankar Dhruv (1869–1942), Balashankar Kantharia (1858–98), Narasinhrao Divetia (1859–1937), Ramanbhai Nilkanth (1868–1928), Manishankar Bhatt 'Kant' (1867–1923), and Sursinhji Gohil 'Kalapi' (1874–1900), among others, were the chief protagonists of this age. These writers were greater beneficiaries of the English education than their predecessors. They were also well versed in the heritage of Sanskrit and Persian literature. Besides, the ideas of the Arya Samaj and the Theosophical Society, which influenced Narmad in the later part of his life, had a more direct impact on the literature of this



*Ramanbhai Nilkanth*

era. The influence of the Advaita philosophy as well as of Swami Vivekananda's ideas and personality is also discernible in the writings of Govardhanram Tripathi and Manilal Dwivedi.

Govardhanram Tripathi's magnum opus *Saraswati-chandra* portrays the love story of a couple who are inspired by a dream of uplifting Indian society towards progress and self-sufficiency from its state of illiteracy, ignorance, passivity, and helplessness. It was the first real classic in Gujarati to prompt the reader to look critically at contemporary society. Not

only was it relevant in its own time, this novel also has the potential to show the path of cultural development for a long period to come. Based on his evaluation of the merits and disadvantages of ancient Indian cultural elements together with those of modern India and the modern West, Govardhanram seeks a synthesis of all three.

Like Govardhanram, Manilal Dwivedi made a case for synthesizing the best elements of Indian and Western cultures. However, his erudite acquaintance with Indian philosophy and abiding faith in Advaita make him a firm believer in the superiority of 'Aryan' over Western culture. He felt that in comparison to the political struggle against the British or the movement for reforms—like widow remarriage and the prohibition of child marriage—getting rid of the impurities in the existing religious practices and precepts through a revival of the glorious philosophy of the Vedas, Upanishads, and Puranas was a greater imperative. Reform of oppressive customs would naturally flow from the social realization of the Advaita philosophy. Manilal also raised some objections to the blanket advo-

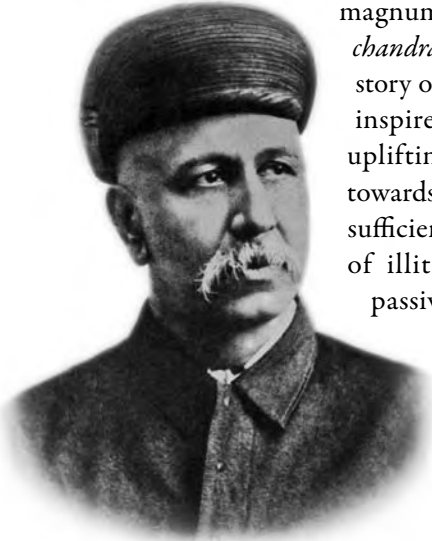
cacy of widow remarriage as he believed that the age, emotions, and preferences of the persons involved in such a union should not be ignored in the enthusiasm for social reform.

The struggle over social reforms is at the centre of the epic satire *Bhadrambhadrā* ('The Noblest of the Noble'), written by Ramanbhai Nilkanth. This book pooh-poohs orthodox Hinduism. Besides, Nilkanth's writings also focus on matters like widow remarriage, women's education, the prohibition of child marriage, caste equality, abstinence from addictions, and so on. He subscribed to John Stuart Mill's principles of liberty and equality, while simultaneously arguing for social reform on the basis of social justice and morality, somewhat in the same manner as the contemporary reformist Mahadev Govind Ranade.

### Gandhi Yug

Literature in most Indian languages, from the late nineteenth century onwards and more particularly after the advent of Mahatma Gandhi, reflects the changes in the cultural environment that followed the spread of the nationalist movement. Mahatma Gandhi's appearance on the national scene after his successful satyagraha in South Africa marked the beginning of a new phase in Gujarati literature. Though he was not a man of literature, Mahatma Gandhi inspired a whole generation of literary personalities in Gujarat. In the words of Kanhaiyalal Munshi (1887–1971): 'Mahatma Gandhi has given to Gujarati prose a new sense of power. With him, beauty of expression has to be a humble housemaid to Truth. And the reader invariably falls under the spell of "the bare, sheer, penetrating power of every line" of his, which, under the stress of some great emotion, attains biblical strength.'

Mahatma Gandhi's ideas on truth, non-violence, constructive work, rural uplift, spiritualization of politics, and purity of ends and means, among many other noble concepts, inspired a generation of writers to create poetry and prose with a social commitment. The literary corpus produced from 1920 to 1940 is categorized under the 'Gandhi Yug'



Govardhanram Tripathi

(Gandhian Age) of Gujarati literature. The Gujarat Vidyapith established by Mahatma Gandhi became a meeting point for young writers committed to the Gandhian philosophy and value system. While Mahatma Gandhi was a towering figure of this era, the many-splendoured genius of Rabindranath Tagore and his quest for beauty in nature also inspired literary writing in Gujarati to a great extent.

lems and exploitation of dalits were highlighted by Gandhian authors. Dattatreya Kalelkar (1885–1981), an essayist and follower of Gandhi popularly known as ‘Kakasaheb’, spread cultural and moral values through his travelogues and spiritual writings.

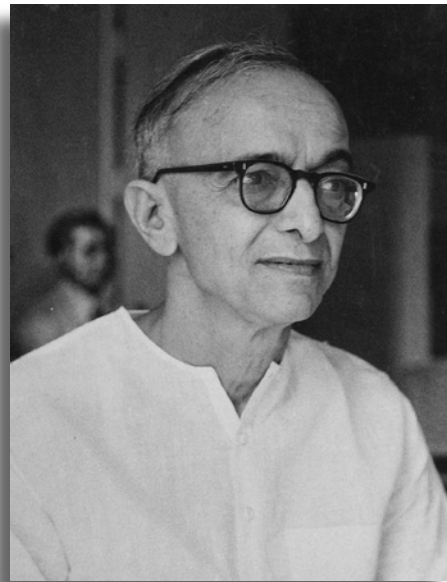
Modern Indian society and its politics are the outcome of two cross-cutting streams: British colonialism and Indian nationalism. Ever since the concept of ‘nation’ appeared during the European Middle Ages, nationalism has been one of the most influential movements. In India too, the nationalist ideology had an all-pervasive influence. The cultural response to nationalism and the nationalist movement was complex and multi-layered. As literature is a significant component of the cultural processes of a society, it cannot remain untouched by the multidimensional impulse of nationalism.

Brimming with patriotic fervour and rooted in the Indian soil, the writings of Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay and Rabindranath Tagore in Bengali, Subramania Bharati in Tamil, Bharatendu Harishchandra, Premchand, and Maithilisharan Gupta in Hindi, Bhai Vir Singh in Punjabi, and Hari Narain Apte in Marathi inspired a sense of confidence and destiny in a generation prejudiced by English education. In Gujarati literature the torch of nationalism was carried forward by

I ask the *littérateurs* if their creations would bring me closer to my God. ... A powerful writer should cultivate his art in such a manner that the reader is absorbed in its reading. ... Our literature today is such that common masses cannot gain anything from it. ... I ask the disciples of literature what they would write for the masses?

—Mahatma Gandhi, in his address to the Gujarati Sahitya Parishad, 2 April 1920

Mahatma Gandhi stood for a literature connected with the common masses and written in a language that even the farmer in a remote village could understand and relate to. The literature of the Gandhi Yug thus inaugurated the much-needed shift in literary expression from a high scholastic culture to a mass culture. It was more openly identified with the common people and their problems than was the elitist and scholastic literature of the Pandit Yug. Once the writers climbed down from their ivory towers, the common masses were able to identify with literature—even with poetry. Tribhuvandas Luhar ‘Sundaram’ (1908–91), Umashankar Joshi (1911–88), and Ramnarayan Pathak (1887–1955) expressed in their poems the pain and expectations of the downtrodden sections of society. Jhaverchand Meghani (1896–1947) and Pannalal Patel (1912–89) introduced rural life and folk traditions into Gujarati literature. Ramanlal V Desai (1892–1954), Gaurishankar G Joshi ‘Dhumketu’ (1892–1966), Manubhai Pancholi ‘Darshak’ (1914–2001), and K M Munshi explored in their fiction themes relating to nationalism, non-violent struggle, and village reconstruction. By this time fiction had come of age in Gujarati literature. Even the prob-




Umashankar  
Joshi

the writers of the Gandhian era. In particular, the novels of K M Munshi, R V Desai, and Manubhai Pancholi explored different shades of nationalism.

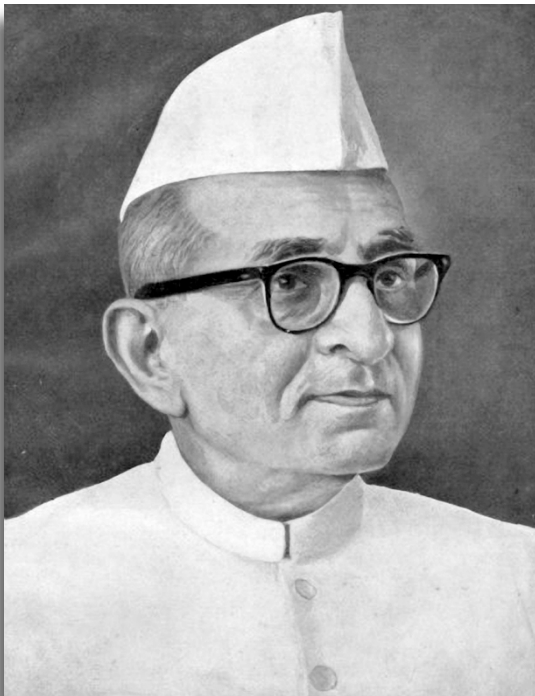
A notable feature of Gujarati literature of the modern era has been the contribution made by several authors to the definition of the regional and cultural identity of Gujarat. Though Dalpatram's writings made some preliminary references to it, it was Narmad who gave the first forceful assertion of the pride of being a Gujarati. His famous song *Jay Jay Garavi Gujarat* has become a veritable anthem of Gujaratis the world over. It needs mention here that Narmad's understanding of a Gujarati was not narrowly parochial, as he suggested that those who have made Gujarat their home, irrespective of their geographic origin, caste, and religion, are equally Gujaratis.

Ranjitram Mehta (1881–1917), the founder of the *Gujarati Sahitya Parishad*—the apex literary body of the Gujarati language—helped further crystallize Gujarat's cultural identity. Narmad's and Ranjitram's ideas were taken to another level by K M Munshi, who in 1913 coined the now com-

monplace concept of Gujarat's *asmita*—a word borrowed from the *Yoga Sutra*. Though there is no exact English equivalent of the word *asmita*, Munshi used it in the sense of a cultural self-consciousness rather than as a metaphor of identity. He depicted Gujarat not so much as a geographical or political region, but as a cultural entity without boundaries. Though he is accused of being narrow and conservative in his understanding of culture and cultural identity, such a conclusion is born out of a mistaken interpretation of his texts. Munshi, as also Ranjitram, clearly argued that Gujarat's cultural identity did not militate against Indian nationalism. They argued that India is nothing more than a composite culture, a mosaic of various regional languages, arts, and other cultures. Hence, the growth of regional cultures and identities does not harm but strengthens the Indian identity. The protagonists of Gujarat's cultural identity in modern literature reminded us of the multilingual and multicultural character of India and drove home the fact that the unity of India can be nourished only by recognizing and accommodating regional diversities.

While different linguistic communities each contain some unique features, they also partake of the ethos of the larger Indian social fabric. Likewise, modern Gujarati literature has reflected the impact of the groups and communities that migrated from outside. It merged within itself the streams of new cultures and literature. It adopted and indigenized the literary forms of the English, Sanskrit, Persian, and Urdu literature. Gujarati literature also reflects the heterogeneity and the aspirations of the sub-cultures that thrived alongside the mainstream culture. Finally, even as the British colonial impact on modern Gujarati literature was quite profound, it did not destroy its cultural distinctiveness or its roots in Indianness. We can sense a certain synthesis of the values and referential frames of Western and Indian civilizations in the mainstream modern Gujarati literature, whose synthetic, cosmopolitan, inclusive, and evolving character is perhaps the most significant element of its cultural ethos. 

K M Munshi



# ***The Atman of Latin American Literature – I***

**Graciela Devita**

LITERATURE serves as a means to listen to the inner voice of beings and things, to attune to God's voice, to his intimate whisper, salient at times. It is one more way to search for higher values—love, empathy, beauty, peace, truth, goodness—to approach them, tracing their source to the sacred deep rhythm one feels when the harmonious resonances of the Atman are grasped. The extremely close bond that exists between faith and art is manifest in all great literary works, the great classics that have transcended time. In Spanish literature very few could escape 'the mystic', because Spain was born out of a passion for religious faith, a fervour that developed intensely and reached the heights of mystical experience—the human being looking for God, finding him, and allowing itself to be enchanted by him—the experience in which human love merges into divine love.

And since each ethnic community actualizes through its language and literature the precise expressive form of its temper, the singular mode of evincing its own faith and of understanding the word 'God', Spain embodied her religious zeal in immortal pieces of literary art. It is interesting to observe how the literary world develops a network, a subtle thread that interrelates and identifies those authors who obtain with their works an impact over a great part of humankind. Maybe without knowing it, they belong to the few who can better render the rays of the Atman and can better formulate the transcendental questions that agitate all of us.

The religion of writers born in Spain, like Cervantes or Miguel de Unamuno for instance, is essentially poetic, based in the experience of the creative word—which is essence in itself; and the transcendental character of this religion has rendered it universal. With this profound literary heritage, Latin

America searched for a similar universality, but 'independently' from its mother Spain, just as the US had attempted independently from Britain.<sup>1</sup> Carrying an accomplished cultural identity inside and assaying it in a new shape—perhaps as a deeper sort of identity—was and is the commitment of artists in all of the Americas.

We will briefly access the works of two Latin American litterateurs, Ricardo Güiraldes (1886–1927) in the present instalment and Amado Nervo (1870–1919) in the next, not because they were exclusive in their spiritual quest—as has been said, 'the mystic' was foundational in Spanish literature—but because their works, having reached universal appeal, have also been touched by the spiritual ideas of India, which adds a particular accent to their mystique.

## ***The Search of a Writer***

Ricardo Güiraldes's works are a clear sample of Latin American literature at the beginning of the twentieth century, the output of a generation of writers who struggled to fit into the modern world order but carefully avoided killing their roots. Güiraldes particularly manifested the hopes of a man who searches for the Truth. His style lies at a midpoint between the traditional and the progressive, the rural and the intellectual, the local and the universal; sometimes the conflict is successfully resolved, at other times it only exposes the complexity of such a task.

Güiraldes was born in the then rural suburbs of Buenos Aires, in a well-to-do family. While he was still young, his parents took him to Paris, at that time the cultural centre of the world. They lived in Saint Cloud villa, where his poetic temperament opened up to the ecstatic contemplation of nature. After a few years the family came back to

Argentina and alternated their city residence with long periods at their *estancia*, cattle ranch, in the countryside near the capital city, where Ricardo entered into contact with the roots of his land, 'the gaucho', a cowman on the way to becoming extinct. Later, he went to Paris several times and on these occasions interacted profusely with the cultural world of that 'city of lights'. In 1910 he travelled to India and other Eastern countries. There is little information about this period of his life, but we guess that this first contact with India produced an effect that would later be seen reflected in his writings. Back in his own country, he had several difficulties in gaining acceptance for his short novels, from both the intellectuals and the general public. However, after a few years he obtained some recognition. In 1922 a severe illness ravaged his body, taking his soul closer to the Christian religion and yoga philosophy. Gradually, his insatiable spirit reached a stage in which he could find no more nutriment in the naked and unnourished skeleton that the body of 'official' religious men were presenting in those days, and he approached the Vedanta philosophy in search of nutritive sap.

His wife, Adelina del Carril de Güiraldes, knew how to explain Ricardo's dazzle the day he discovered the Vedanta philosophy: 'There he found that infinity that attracted him so much.' Through a serious study of Vedanta, and by 'weeding the path' to the essence, to paraphrase his own words, he reached the common primeval ground of all religions: spiritual communion with God. Many of Güiraldes's Eastern ideas are reflected in the characters of his novels, but in some passages of his notes—published posthumously under the title *El Sendero* (The Path)—his observations and his personal search through yoga are more evident. In the introduction he remarks:

I ask myself what is my way to spirituality. Yoga treatises advise us of two procedures: mystic meditation fixed on the 'I', and the analysis of the 'not-I' through which we strip off the 'I'. The first method ... is convenient to those of contemplative tendency, the second to those of scientific. ...

This notebook will serve me to weed my truth. The extractions I think to make from the poems or thoughts I have written, which inspiration insinuates as spiritual, will be the base of my search, because, being anterior to all my spiritualistic reading, they cannot be attributed to the lessons of man. On the other hand, the likeness of those poems or thoughts to the oldest and newest spiritual preaching shows me the route. If I have reached beforehand certain intuitions, now I can affirm them by comparing them with what has been learnt and make them more my own through comprehension. Writing is my concrete way to meditate and through it I must proceed as through a designated path.

A few of his thoughts based on oriental ideas are rendered later in this text:

Only our will can channel us towards our own creation. We should create ourselves. To be twice-born we need to be our own mother. ... The second birth is the only conscious one, the only one that complies with our own will. The day we are to create ourselves, according to our own concept of perfection—which is intuition of the archetype we head for—we will truly be what we want and should be. ...

Does there exist in us a magnetic force identical to the latent and active force of our world? If so, illumination or nirvana is nature in its extreme. The clue lies in placing oneself in a receptive state. ...

'Listening' is a great word, almost synonymous with 'offering'. To listen is to ready oneself for the reception—the real communication—of the unknown and the essential. To pray is, in a somewhat coarse sense, to listen and to offer. From the gesture of offering a prayer may come the capacity to establish the contact produced by illumination.

### **Literature Becoming Living**

Coming back to Güiraldes's literary style, it was the product of a duality that had split his consciousness, drawing it at times towards atheism or materialism, especially in his first works, and at other times towards mysticism or Christian purity:



All of Güiraldes's works, including his masterpiece, *Don Segundo Sombra* (1926), endeavour to capture the material and spiritual nature of the universe. ... Observation of different scenery and customs, of different psychologies and religious practices led him to the belief that he could best intuit and express the universal brotherhood of man, the cosmic unity of all things, by intensifying his search not only for the similarities between the alien peoples and his own, but also by seeking out the differing and seemingly unique features of his race, his land, and his people—by expressing his own personality and his own heritage in his art.<sup>2</sup>

His work can be divided into three periods: In the first, charged with his religious background, worldly love is the way to face the gods, to defeat them, to be stronger than the religious impositions on society that distance man from God. In his second period, worldly love is a way of 'praying', an opportunity to approach the gods and fulfil the commandments of the beyond. In his third period, he seeks to love God, decisively distancing himself from worldly love, which for him is now the temptation that throws one down from spiritual heights. Güiraldes reaches God through 'beauty' and through 'observation'. He is a jnani and a bhakta at the same time. Art was, from the beginning, the bridge that took him to God, and at a certain moment in his life the poet became the pontiff, *sacerdos et pontifex*.

It was in this latter period that he produced his masterpiece *Don Segundo Sombra*, a work since translated into several languages. 'The novel is highly lyrical in nature and the influence of Asian thought and culture ... is evident in the subtler mysticism expressed not only through the characters, but also in the lengthy descriptions of the land.'<sup>3</sup> An adolescent orphan of half-urban origin—who represents the rootless nascent contemporary culture, we may say—gets acquainted with a grown-up gaucho, Don Segundo, who represents the remnant of the land's soul. A master-disciple relationship is created between them, complete with initiation into the traditional local



Ricardo  
Güiraldes

life and practical teachings—which, between the lines, carry a spiritual meaning too—the toughness of the learning process, and the final departure when the disciple is able to stand on his own feet. The work not only touches the essence of the local people but also the essential search for, and discovery of, deeper and truer levels of identity in any human being. It is this element that allowed the novel to stand the test of time and gain universal acceptance.


In spite of the multiple features reproduced in the main character of the work, Don Segundo, who was based on a real person, there is no doubt that the inner moral strength of this character—his ascendancy over people and things *como si le quedaran chicas*, as if they fit small to him, his lack of love affairs, his subtle presence which reveals 'an idea', 'a being'—are all projections of the yogic and mystic ideal pursued and attained by Güiraldes at the end of his life, as he finally reached the serenity that silences all pains. On his way to India, his dream land, he died in Paris of throat cancer at the young age of forty-one. His remains were taken to Buenos Aires where they were received by the then president of the country.



### Intellectually Colloquial

We do not know if Güiraldes was acquainted with the ideas of Swami Vivekananda, who was his contemporary. But Güiraldes's writings, especially *Don Segundo Sombra*, reflect that spirit which Swamiji wanted for India: to accept the modern without discarding whatever is authentic in one's tradition, and to understand one's national identity and grow through it, without suppressing it, while incorporating as far as necessary that which is of value from other traditions.

His wife, Adelina, accompanied him in his ideal. She later came in contact with the Ramakrishna movement and spent fourteen years in India (1937–51), living in a hired bungalow near the Ramakrishna Ashrama in Bengaluru, where she translated into Spanish Swami Nikhilananda's English rendering of the *Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*. She applied in this translation the literary style she had amply imbued from her husband, where the colloquial blends with the erudite—surprisingly enough the same style in which the original *Sri Sri Ramakrishna Kathamrita* in Bengali is written, as far as I have been informed. Unconsciously mirroring the original, Adelina's translation presents Sri Ramakrishna's words in an

appealing idiomatic style, while other descriptions are framed in a refined, cultured Spanish, making of the whole an exquisitely accomplished literary and spiritual piece of art. If Sri Sarada Devi was 'Sri Ramakrishna's own chalice of His love for the world', to cite Sister Nivedita, Adelina was Ricardo Güiraldes's extended contribution to Ramakrishna literature in the Spanish language. 

### Notes and References

1. To give an example of how deep and influential the literary tradition of Spain was and still is, mention can be made of a poll organized by editors at the Norwegian Book Clubs in Oslo on 7 May 2002, where around a hundred well-known authors from fifty-four countries voted for the 'greatest literary piece of all time'. The four-hundred-year-old *Don Quixote*, by Miguel de Cervantes, gained fifty per cent more votes than any other book—eclipsing works by Shakespeare, Homer, and Tolstoy. For the last four centuries *Don Quixote* has been a best-seller and one of the most published and translated books.
2. G H Weiss, 'Technique in the Works of Ricardo Güiraldes', *Hispania*, 43/3 (September 1960), 355.
3. Darrel B Lockhart, 'Ricardo Güiraldes', *Encyclopedia of Latin American Literature*, comp. Verity Smith (Taylor & Francis, 1997), 404.

*At Ramakrishna Ashrama, Bengaluru. Left to right, sitting: Swami Tyagishananda, Ramu, Adelina del Carril de Güiraldes, Swamis Siddheswarananda and Vimalananda, and Br Ramaiah (later Swami Jnanaghanananda); standing: Br Prasad (later Swami Punyatmananda) and Br Srikantha (later Swami Kirtidananda)*



# A Note on the Social Thinking of Shankaradeva

Dr Jashobanta Roy

ALL philosophical reflection on society is only one part of the wider history of human thought. Every philosopher is to be understood against this greater background of historical 'situatedness'. Bertrand Russell says: 'Philosophers are both effects and causes: effects of their social circumstances and of the politics and institutions of their time; causes (if they are fortunate) of beliefs which mould the politics and institutions of later ages.' To understand a philosopher one must be well informed of the social and political conditions of his time. Hence, to understand the philosophy of Shankaradeva (1449?–1568) we must acquaint ourselves with the socio-political and religious conditions of the India of his time.

In the early fifteenth century many parts of India, particularly Assam, were witnessing a decadence of socio-religious life. Superstition and malpractice in various forms were vitiating social life in the name of religion. Assam was then inhabited by a largely heterogeneous group of people speaking various Indo-European, Mon-Khmer, Tibeto-Burmese, and Ahom dialects. They believed in the existence of various gods and goddesses and had diverse shades of cultural life. On the political plane the land was divided into several kingdoms that were involved in a constant struggle for supremacy. The resulting political instability contributed to the chaotic conditions in the social sphere. Shaivism and Shaktism were the dominant cults in Assam. There were also minor sects like the Natha yogis, marginal Buddhists, and the cult of Manasa. Tantric forms of worship were highly popular with those people allured by the outward attractions of the cult. But this worship tended to degenerate into gruesome rites.

At this crucial juncture Shankaradeva emerged on the scene with his liberal message of neo-Vaishnavism, which gave a new direction to Assamese society. Unity of godhead, constant and unalloyed devotion, mental equanimity, and deprecation of excessive ritualism and caste prejudices were the underlying features of Shankaradeva's bhakti cult. The core of this religious revival was, therefore, democratic. There can be no doubt that the seeds of religious, cultural, and social democracy sown by Shankaradeva helped the people of Assam evolve a reasonably unified socio-religious culture out of the prevailing chaos.

## A Social Philosopher

Let us take a look at the philosophical ideals of Shankaradeva against this backdrop. Most scholars are of the opinion that Shankaradeva was a reformer and a poet, but not a philosopher. It is true that Shankaradeva did not indulge in metaphysical speculation in order to establish his neo-Vaishnavite philosophy. If philosophy is an intellectual pastime, then Shankaradeva is not a philosopher. If philosophy is a search for truth and the goal of human life, Shankaradeva is certainly a thinker of high rank. He was not a philosopher who engaged himself in academic philosophical enterprise. But he had a definite philosophy of life which he firmly held and made amply clear in his translation of the Bhagavata into Assamese, as well as in his other writings—*Kirtana*, *Bhaktiratnakara*, *Bhakti-pradipa*, *Gunamala*, *Ankia-nat* (One-act Plays), and *Bar-git* (Great Songs). He had his own comprehensive views about the origin, nature, and structure of the world, about religion and morality, and about the ends and ideals of individual and social life. These justify the claim that he was not

only a reformer and poet but also a philosopher.

Shankaradeva believed that the fundamental truth is the one Supreme Soul immanent in all Creation and that all beings and objects are manifestations of the same infinite, eternal, and blissful Spirit. In the Haramohana episode of *Kirtana*, he wrote: 'Bhagavan Narayana is the Supreme Soul and is the one and only lord of the universe. Nothing exists without him.' Again, in the Assamese version of the tenth skandha of the Bhagavata, Shankaradeva speaks of the all-pervasive and transcendental nature of God: 'Water, air, earth, and sky pervade the world; in like manner God pervades the mind, intellect, and vital breath of beings. He is the pure and conscious Self, without attributes. In him the world exists and yet he is beyond the world.' These are the views of a philosopher.

Shankaradeva was not only a philosopher but also a social thinker. A social philosopher must search for a thread of continuity in the midst of historical changes. He must work out the full future implications of the meaningful social alternatives unfolding before him and enquire into the possibility of their realization. That Shankaradeva was deeply concerned about future society is reflected in many of his writings.

Shankaradeva has given us a catholic outlook and a loving liberal religion free from ritualism and superstition. He apprehended the interrelationship between religion and morality and put much emphasis on the ethical aspects of religion. At the same time, he did not confine himself to merely preaching bhakti and upholding ethical virtue; he worked actively to establish a new social order by removing ignorance, superstition, corruption, inequality, and untouchability. He raised the status of socially downtrodden communities by installing them as *atais*, elder devotees, and *mahantas*, heads of institutions. In *Kirtana*, which is a scripture for his followers, he declares:

*Karia kalite kirtana ati;  
Pave vaikunthaka choutrish jati.*

In the Kali age the people of the thirty-four

castes can attain to Vaikuntha by reciting the name of God.

*Sito chandalaka garishtha mani;  
Yar jibbage theke haribani.*

That untouchable is to be considered glorious who has the name of God on the tip of his tongue.

*Chandalo hari nam lave matra;  
Kariba uchit yajnara patra.*

An untouchable is fit to be the priest in a sacrifice if only he recites the name of God.

*Krishnar kathata yito rasika;  
Brahmana janma tar lage kika.  
Smaroka matra hari dina-rati;  
Na bachhe bhakti jati-ajati.*

Why need he be a brahmana if he is an admirer of the glories of God? Let him remember the name of God day and night, bhakti does not care for castes high or low.

### The Satra and Namghar

Shankaradeva provided a socio-religious model where people from all walks of life—irrespective of caste, creed, community, religion, or social status—could be accommodated. This model assumes special significance in present times. Professor Birinchi Kumar Barua asserts that in the current socio-political scenario of Assam, characterized by a tendency towards social disintegration and religious degeneration, Shankaradeva can be a beacon light and a cementing force.

The neo-Vaishnavism of Shankaradeva sought to create an egalitarian civil society based on the shared values of fraternity, equality, humanism, and democracy, although such characterization may appear anachronistic to modern historians. His message of democracy was primarily expressed through bhakti—he stressed that devotion to God was not the sole prerogative of a privileged few but the common right of all who strove for it, irrespective of their social status. Shankaradeva envisioned an ideal society based on equality of treatment and opportunity, a sense of belonging to the country, and humane co-existence.

The institution of the Namghar is the product

of this vision of Shankaradeva for the creation of a democratic social order. He wanted people to get over artificial distinctions of caste and class and stand as one. Resting on the twin principles of the equality of human beings and the recognition of the worth and dignity of every individual, the Namghar played an integrating role by bringing diverse castes and creeds within its fold. Shankaradeva laid the foundation of democratic norms in the functioning of the Namghars. He encouraged tolerance and non-violence and fostered solidarity by giving individuals from all creeds the sacramental right and the privilege to profess the Eka-sharana faith, the name by which his dispensation came to be known. Devotees from socially underprivileged sections were elevated to the apostolate. The movement thus helped tone down the rigours of caste discrimination and the menace of religious bigotry. Even today, if Assam and North-east India are, to a great extent, able to withstand the scourge of communal tension, then this is due to the liberal neo-Vaishnavite ideal which has been integrated with artistic pursuits and has permeated the social mind.

The Satra and Namghar are two important multifaceted religious institutions through which the Eka-sharana Nama Dharma is sustained and propagated. Shankaradeva instituted the practice of placing as an object of reverence a holy book, usually the Bhagavata, on a wooden pedestal in a common shrine called *mani-kuta*. This helped dispense with the ritual complexities that image worship involved and thus simplified worship. Right in front of the *mani-kuta* is the *kirtan-ghar*, a large hall used for religious singing and dramas. The *mani-kuta* and the *kirtan-ghar* together constitute the Namghar. Devotees usually live near the Namghar, their houses organized in lanes called *hatis*. The *hatis* and the Namghar often get institutionalized into what is known as a Satra.

The Satra and Namghar have been enriching Assamese life morally, socially, and educationally and have contributed a great deal to the realm of literature. As a religious institution, the Satra supplies a popular religion based on simple ethical and devo-

tional codes. The Satra acts as the moral governor of the people. The head of the Satra not only takes cognizance of the moral conduct of disciples but also instructs them on the right way of living. The village Namghar functions as an effective grass-roots institution of civil society. Shankaradeva conceived the idea of community development through the institution of the village Namghar. He encouraged the village communities based on the Satra to settle disputes amicably in accordance with local judicial procedures. The village Namghar enabled the local people to cooperate in different areas of public life on an equal footing.

### **Modern Relevance**

The neo-Vaishnavite movement must be credited with the unification of various groups professing diverse religious and ethical beliefs under the banner of Eka-sharana Nama Dharma. In present times the Namghar has immense potential for being used as a platform to spread the message of peace, harmony, and integration which is so central to the neo-Vaishnavite philosophy. With its stress on participation, equity, consciousness-raising, and ecological sustainability, the Namghar paves the way for unity and coherence in society.

The neo-Vaishnavism initiated by Shankaradeva had all the makings of a social movement that was powerful and innovative enough not to leave any section of the Assamese society untouched. Shankaradeva's teachings heralded the advent of a new sociocultural era in Assam. Though he lived and preached about six hundred years ago, his teachings have great relevance to present-day society. Shankaradeva's is a universal personality. The message of love, brotherhood, equality, service, and peace which he propagated is indeed a source of solace to humans afflicted with the tension, turmoil, and strife of contemporary life. Today we are going through a crisis created by terrorism, ethnic violence, religious fundamentalism, regionalism, and sociocultural disintegration. The need of the hour is moral rearmament and spiritual edification. We need to look to Shankaradeva for guidance. ❧

# Struggle and Conflict in the Plays of Jaishankar Prasad

Dr Narendra Kohli

(Continued from the previous issue)

IT is possible that Jaishankar Prasad was concerned about the policies of Muhammad Ali Jinnah and the Muslim League, which supported the two-nation theory, and pursued divisive, pro-British politics. He was repeatedly alerting his countrymen to this danger. He could see strong possibilities of the country being betrayed by self-seeking minorities falling under a wrong leadership. Later events prove that Prasad's fears were not ill-founded. The Hindu-Muslim two-nation theory of the Muslim League divided the country, and people who could have peacefully coexisted as citizens of one country are standing as inimical neighbours with guns pointed towards each other. There has been war more than once, a state of perpetual strife prevails, and mutual hatred is being fostered.

Prasad probably wished that Prapanchabuddhi be politically defeated and that, under the leadership of Prakhyaatakirti, even minorities would give up seditious activities and help the nation. However, despite all efforts from Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, and others, the Muslim League did not let the birth of an undivided free India happen.

## Greed and Luxury

When a country is faced with such troubled times, several portents clearly foretell these happenings. Prasad puts it succinctly: 'Just as there is a lull before the storm, just as the sky is covered by enchanting blue clouds before lightning strikes—is not the Gupta dynasty in the same condition?'<sup>1</sup> In another place, he says: 'A fiery flow of sulphur will enter into the iron armoury of Aryavarta and trigger a blast.

The restless goddess of war will roam the beautiful blue apocalyptic clouds, a rainbow-like victory-garland in hand, and brave hearts will dance like peacocks' (624).

In *Chandragupta* Prasad writes: 'The pen and ink of conspiracy and deceit are being prepared to record the future of Aryavarta. The fragmented states of Uttarapatha are badly afflicted with hatred. ... Dacoits and Mlecchas are building empires and the Aryan race is standing on the edge of the cliff of doom awaiting a push' (621–2). Ambhika is busy plotting, Nanda is angry with Puru, and the so-called world-conquering armies of Alexander are knocking at the doors of India.

The circumstances are similar in *Dhruvaswamini*, though not so alarming. Chandragupta is in prison and his betrothed wife has been secretly married off to Ramagupta. The Shaka army has completely surrounded the Gupta forces. The Shaka king wants Dhruvaswamini, the Gupta queen, for himself, and the wives of the Gupta feudatories for his own commanders. While these insulting demands are being made, the country is in the sad predicament of being ruled by an indulgent impotent drunkard, Ramagupta, who has the cunning and vile Shikharaswami for his minister. Prasad focuses on the luxury of the ruler and the people. The terrible circumstances turn all the more frightful because of this predilection for pleasures. The increase in the old king Kumaragupta's promiscuity had already been suggested in *Skandagupta Vikramaditya*. Dhatusena comments sarcastically: 'O Emperor! It is said that feminine counsel is very useful and appropriate' (465).

Later, Sharvanaga the soldier warns Bhatarka, 'This is a national emergency and we are witnessing drunken orgies at Kusumpur instead of preparations for war. The capital has become the centre of indulgence. No amount of enjoyment seems to be enough for the people here. The demoness of enjoyment remains unsated in spite of newer means and newer fantasies' (518).

After his study of history, Prasad came to the conclusion that by providing state support to the debauchery of the ruling classes a country compromises its vigilance and sense of duty and gets ensnared in a whirlpool of dangers. Invasions take place from outside, and rebellions are fomented within. But this country has been repeatedly forgetting this lesson of history and has been paying the price time and again. While penning his plays, Prasad could hardly have thought that the very acts of the traitorous debauchee rulers of the past would be again repeated in free India.

**In every century** the generals and the rulers (with rare exceptions like Ashoka and Augustus) have smiled at the philosophers' timid dislike of war. In the military interpretation of history war is the final arbiter, and is accepted by all but cowards and simpletons. ... The Ten Commandments must be silent when self-preservation is at stake. ...

The philosopher answers: Yes, and the devastating results will be in accord with history. ... [But] there is something greater than history. Somewhere, sometime, in the name of humanity, we must challenge a thousand evil precedents, and dare to apply the Golden Rule to nations, as the Buddhist king Ashoka did (262 BC), or at least do what Augustus did when he bade Tiberius desist from further invasion of Germany (AD 9). ... 'Magnanimity in politics,' said Edmund Burke, 'is not seldom the truest wisdom, and a great empire and little minds go ill together.'

—*The Lessons of History*, 82–5

In this explosive state of national decline all leaders capable of stemming the rot remain indifferent or are eager to shirk their responsibilities. The non-

chance of these flickering lamps of hope in the ocean of darkness is as remarkable as it is important. *Skandagupta Vikramaditya* begins with a portrayal of this indifference on the part of Skanda: 'How intoxicating and meaningless is the pleasure of power! The strong desire to be the controller and the doer forces one into unseemly deeds. Are people greedier than the attendants in celebrations and [more defensive than] shields among weapons good [for a country]?' Then he asks Parnadatta: 'I should exercise power. But for what gain?' (461–2).

Though his inherent sense of duty prevents him from becoming fully indifferent to his country and its worsening situation, the mendicant in Skanda always wants to break free from the bondage of authority. Before saying goodbye to his empire, he tells Devasena in despair: 'Let us take a vow in front of Mahadevi's tomb that we will not be separated' (543). Skanda parts with his empire. Having Devasena is a purely personal matter. This is that height of indifference where, giving up worry about the empire, he wants to forget everything by being confined within the limited bounds of personal happiness. But Devasena's refusal awakens his sense of duty and he decides to remain a life-long celibate, sacrificing personal happiness for duty. After regaining his empire, he gives it away to Purugupta. There is no trace of enjoyment, attachment, or self-assertion. Even though an emperor, he is 'unfortunate Skandagupta, lonely Skanda.'

### **The Ruler and the Sage**

There are two important characters in *Chandragupta*: Chanakya and Chandragupta. Before he ascertained his duty, this indifference to public life arose in Chanakya too. He thought of remaining satisfied within the limits of his personal life. The disappointments of life made him indifferent: 'Father's whereabouts are not known; even the hut is gone. Suvasini has become an actress, perhaps driven by hunger. Two families have been destroyed at the same time and Kusumpur is dozing on a bed of flowers. Was it to this end that people created the cool shade of the state? Magadha! Magadha! Beware! Such cruelty!

This is impossible to bear. I will overturn you. Either I will make you anew or will destroy you! (After a pause) Let me talk to Nanda once. No, let me get my land and my work. I will not be a merchant of words, but a farmer. How does the good or ill of the nation concern me?' (631).

But this indifference cannot stand in the face of the call of duty and Chanakya is not content with getting his land from Nanda. He fights with Nanda, Alexander, and Seleucus. He either destroys or wins over each of Alexander, Seleucus, Philip, Nanda, Parvateshwara, Kalyani, Ambhika, Rakshasa, Suvasini, Malavika, and the others who act as obstacles, enemies, or competitors to Chandragupta. In the end, he hands over Suvasini to Rakshasa and goes to the forest, taking Chandragupta's father with him. Chanakya was apprehensive that he or Maurya could interfere with Chandragupta's administration and therefore arranged for the removal of both. Once he gives up his indifference, as he did his infatuation earlier, and sets about on the path of duty, the all-powerful authoritative Chanakya of Aryavarta enjoys all his powers in a detached way. He tells Chandragupta, 'Maurya! This is no time to talk to girls' (667). He completely gives up his attachment to Suvasini. When he could enjoy being the minister of an unchallenged empire, he walks away renouncing everything.

The monk in him calls out repeatedly and that aspect of his personality becomes particularly pronounced: 'Though capable of everything, the brahmana rejects all these dumps of delusion and gives away his knowledge for the welfare of nature' (622). Even when Chandragupta objects to the limitless powers he enjoys, Chanakya realizes his true state and says in agreement:

I am a brahmana. My empire was of mercy, my religion was of love. I am a brahmana—the resident of the island of peace in the ocean of bliss. The sun, moon, and stars were my lamps, the infinite sky my awning, the lush green soft earth my bed. Intellectual pleasures were my work and contentment my wealth. Where have I come, leaving that birthplace of the brahmana? Vicious plots instead

of friendship, thorns masquerading as flowers, fear in place of love, and wicked counsel in place of the nectar of wisdom. How much more can one fall? Take away, Maurya Chandragupta! Snatch away your power. This will be my rebirth. My life has turned ugly and corrupt because of political intrigue. I am running after shadowy images and imaginary ideals on a deluded search. Peace has been lost, true nature has been forgotten. I know now how far and how low I have gone (715).

The sage Dandyayana also gives a hint of this state in which Chanakya finds himself: 'Chanakya! You will have to stay in this place for some days. Though you are adept in all branches of knowledge, you never got the fruits thereof; you have not got over your anxiety. Your mind is still restless. This is not a happy state of affairs' (652).

What Chanakya experienced on occasions and what was corroborated by Rishi Dandyayana in clear terms was not untrue. After achieving his goal, when Chanakya gives up the empire and goes to the forest, he feels:

How glorious is today's sunrise! O Sun! Let your light bring welfare to the world. I feel as though I am becoming selfless today. I realize that whatever I did till today was a delusion; the real thing has come to the fore today. Today I am realizing my inherent brahmanahood. The ocean of consciousness is waveless and the light of knowledge is pure. Has the potter's wheel of my karma created its pitcher and finished its work? Yes, the prayer for everyone's happiness is embracing peace along with the morning breeze. O God! I am blessed today (736).

On the other hand there is Chandragupta Maurya, who is seen to be an enjoyer of the fruits of actions. He is the lord of the empire, the lord of limitless wealth and power. Even he has been given the reins of the empire for the fulfilment of his duties. Nowhere is Chandragupta the person of importance. When he talks to Malavika, Chanakya scolds him saying he should not be wasting his valuable time talking to girls. When his childhood

friend Kalyani reminds him of her love for him, Chandragupta says: 'But princess, my heart bleeds at the terrible state of my country. The fire of my sorrow has wilted the creeper of memory' (664).

The individual in Chandragupta awakens too. He realizes that he is lonely and sad, though he is an emperor: 'I have become different from all, a veritable display of fear. None is close to me. You too address me only as emperor' (712). He laments: 'Malavika! If you want to see war, tear open my heart and see! A war between hope and despair, between existence and void! I have no wants, yet someone seems to fill me with blanks. Malavika, you are not merely my betel-nut carrier. You represent my faith, my friendship. Look, whether poor or otherwise, I have not kept any secrets from you. Whether my heart has something within or not, I do not know even on searching it' (713).

But Chandragupta cannot leave the post of emperor to get rid of this void in his heart. Not because he is steeped in enjoyment, but because he cannot run away from his duties. He has been made an emperor not because he deserves enjoyments, but because he is a kshatriya: 'When a kshatriya takes his weapons, no cry of distress ought to be heard.' For the sake of this duty, he has to see Kalyani commit suicide, be silent on Malavika's death, and finally bid goodbye to his parents and teacher.

Things are a bit different in *Dhruvaswamini*, but the facts are essentially the same. Dhruvaswamini does not have the ideals of empire, nation, and state before her, as is the case with Prince Chandragupta. But she does feel the need to protect the family honour and her own dignity. She is indifferent to herself and to Chandragupta because of her personal despair: 'The wheel of politics crushes everyone, let it be so; let it crush us too, the weak and the helpless' (748). Her indifference is due to the loss of her own interests and her thwarted desires. This despair makes her so timid that she falls at Ramagupta's feet and begs for her honour and dignity. But Ramagupta misunderstands her humility and indifference and does not protect her. Now duty beckons Dhruvaswamini. She first thinks of committing sui-



*Mural of Chandragupta Maurya's council*

cide, but then she wants to live, rebels, and takes to struggle. As a result, she becomes Chandragupta's queen and the empress of his empire.

Prasad underscores certain contextual conclusions by creating similar situations and themes repeatedly in his plays. We clearly see that the right to rule is not a means to enjoyment but the call of duty. He alone is the best ruler who rules in a detached manner, considers it his duty, and can give up his rule and walk away at a moment's notice. These conclusions become vital when applied to the present political situation in India, where the 'chair' is only a means to achieving selfish goals for the sake of which principles, character, the interests of the masses, and national security are all sacrificed, where political horse-trading is acceptable and expedient political agreements are made in contravention of all principles.

Prasad considered proper fulfilment of duties purer and more honourable than renunciation born of the lethargy of *tamas*, for the urge to renounce may be born out of the distress of personal suffering. Such renunciation, despondence, or indifference amounts to running away from one's duties. All personal considerations of happiness and sorrow that come in the way of national and social interests are to be given up. The happiness of one's society and country is not only more important than personal happiness and misery but is paramount.

*(To be concluded)*

## Reference

1. Jaishankar Prasad, *Prasad ke Sampurna Natak evam Ekanki* (Allahabad: Lokabharati, 2004), 462.



# Narada Bhakti Sutra

Swami Bhaskareswarananda

(Continued from the September issue)

## 77. Sukha-duḥkhecchālābhādi-tyakte kāle pratikṣamāṇe kṣaṇārdham-api vyartham na neyam.

*Giving up pleasure and pain, desire and gain,  
and the like, biding one's time, one must not  
waste even half a moment.*

YOU can't tune yourself to God because of the obstruction caused by the drag of *sukha-duḥkha-icchā*, thought of profit and loss—all pulls concerning the world. Thoughts of comfort, avoidance of trouble, and the like always arise in your mind, even when you want to live a life of sadhana or do God's work. Consideration of profit and loss, avoidance of suffering, seeking pleasure, and a desire to 'be reported' enter into the life of the sadhaka. Hence, Narada advises to give up these subject-object drags of the world.

*Kāle pratikṣamāṇe*: the sadhaka will have to wait for the transcendental *anubhava*, experience of Reality. Mahapurush Maharaj Swami Shivananda used to say: 'Ma, amar anubhaver daraja khule de; O Divine Mother, open the door of my spiritual experience.' This *anubhava* will pull your mind within and ultimately lead you to realization.

Radha says:

*Sakhi ke ba shunailo shyam nam?  
Kaner bhitari diya marama pashilo go,  
Akul karilo mor pran!*

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The text comprises the edited notes of Swami Bhaskareswarananda's classes on the *Narada Bhakti Sutra*, taken down by some residents of the Ramakrishna Math, Nagpur. The classes were conducted between 17 December 1965 and 24 January 1966.

Friend, who made me hear Shyama's name? It has reached the heart through the ear and made me restless!

Such *śravaṇa*, such listening with the heart, is not possible—not to speak of *manana* and *nididhyāsana*—if your being is vibrating with worldly comfort and other pleasures.

## 78. Ahimsā-satya-śauca-dayāstikyādi- cāritryāṇi paripālaniyāni.

*Virtues like non-violence, truthfulness, purity,  
compassion, and faith are to be cultivated.*

Bhaktas may be tempted to ignore moral values. But morality is the backbone of spiritual life. *Ahimsā*: no ill-feeling towards any one. This will give the feeling of attunement with the reality in others. *Satya*: if you are truthful, you will naturally transcend false pulls and progress towards the Reality. *Śauca*: purity. This is another name for *parā bhakti* or *parā-vidyā*, supreme knowledge. Purity means *amanikṛta-mana*, a totally dissolved mind. Such a mind is the same as pure Atman. Pure mind is a tranquil mind in which Reality flashes. *Dayā*: compassion; it does not mean a feeling of giving concessions to others—such *dayā* is actually a masquerade of the ego. Real spiritual *dayā* is the melting of the heart for others, which makes your individuality disappear. *Āstikya*: positive faith. Implicit faith has tremendous power and is directly related to spiritual evolution.

## 79. Sarvadā sarva-bhāvena niścintitaiḥ bhagavān-eva bhajanīyaḥ.

*The Blessed Lord alone must be worshipped  
always and in every way, remaining free from  
all anxieties and worries.*

Practice of moral values alone is not enough if there is no sadhana-bhajana—worship, meditation, and other spiritual practices. Narada also tells what real sadhana is. *Sarvadā*: in all circumstances, one must have God-consciousness. *Sarva-bhāvena*: complete attunement with God, and not with anything else.

**80. Sa kīrtiyamāṇaḥ śīghram-  
evāvirbhavaty-anubhāvayati (ca)  
bhaktān.**

*Being thus glorified, the Lord manifests himself speedily and blesses the devotees (with realization).*

*Āvirbhavati*: He will manifest himself, not by your sadhana, but by himself. *Anubhāvayati*: He makes the sadhaka feel his presence more and more and ultimately blesses him with realization. When you feel that everything is coming through him and not by your effort, then there will be the *āvirbhāva*, manifestation, of Bhagavan, and he will bless you with realization. ‘Not I but You’; this is realization. This is mukti through bhakti.

**81. Tri-satyasya bhaktir-eva garīyasī  
bhaktireva garīyasī.**

*Only love for the Absolute is the greatest; is indeed the greatest.*

Narada comes to a very constructive conclusion, with some novelty. *Garīyasī*: the sadhaka must have this conviction, that the path of bhakti is the best; then alone will he do sadhana with his whole being. ‘Greatest’ does not indicate narrow-mindedness, but that bhakti is the most natural path.

**82. Guṇamāhātmyāsakti-rūpāsakti-  
pūjāsakti-smaraṇāsakti-dāsyāsakti-  
sakhyāsakti-vātsalyāsakti-kāntāsakti-  
ātmanivedanāsakti-tanmayatāsakti-  
paramavirahāsakti-rūpā ekadhā api  
ekādaśadhā bhavati.**

*Bhakti, though one only, manifests itself in eleven different forms: love of the glorification of the Lord’s blessed qualities, love of his*

*beauty, love of worship, love of remembrance, love of service, love of him as friend, love of him as child, love of him as husband, love of self-surrender to him, love of complete absorption in him, love of the pain of separation from him.*

One and the same love flows through eleven different forms of expression. Not that you have to follow all of them. One may feel inclined to any one of them according to one’s own psychological make-up. Love is common, the forms are different.

*Guṇāsakti*: *Guṇa* here means the expression of divinity, as for example the instances where Sri Ramakrishna’s divinity manifests. *Rūpāsakti*: Here the devotee is looking at the Divine through its physical appearance and form. Thinking of the *romāñca*, horripilation, on Sri Ramakrishna’s body in samadhi is a way to practise this. *Pūjāsakti*: This is natural for some sadhakas who feel delight as soon as they think of *pūjā*, worship. Remember the delight felt by Kshudiram, Sri Ramakrishna’s father, when he saw fresh leaves on the bilva tree. *Smaraṇāsakti*: In some people *smaraṇa*, remembrance of God, leads to tremendous absorption.

*Dāsyāsakti*: Devotees with this attitude attain union through absolute submissiveness and transcendence of the ego. *Sakhyāsakti*: If you have a natural tendency to make friends, then instead of seeking human friendship, which is bound to end in frustration or ruin, establish friendship with God, the absolute Reality, as was done by Arjuna. In this way, your love flowing through *sakhya-bhāva* will melt your ego. *Vātsalyāsakti*: Jatadhari’s love was expressed in terms of a father’s feelings; he realized God through that. *Kāntāsakti*: Love of a wife for her husband. This is natural for some bhaktas. *Ātmanivedanāsakti*: For some people surrender is natural. They surrender all aspects of their personality—their body, mind, individuality—lovingly to God.

*Tanmayatāsakti*: The same oneness is expressed in another way here. The sadhakas feel the Beloved is their own self. You may give yourself to the Beloved, or you may take up the Beloved within your own being and break the barrier of separation

between you and the Beloved, and thus become one with him. *Parama-virahāsakti*: Intensity of love is felt in separation; so, for some bhaktas, separation is another name for communion. Look at those gopis who could not go to Sri Krishna and became unconscious. He is your abiding reality and yet you are not having realization! Feel that you are still separate from your Beloved, though he is your reality. Such intensity of love due to separation will lead to communion, absorption, and ultimately realization. This *viraha* is not like secular separation out of frustration.

You should neither condemn yourself or others because some of these attitudes do not appeal to you. Nor should you imitate others. Some may not have these *bhavas*, but may have a philosophical or poetic way of experiencing love. Love is the common factor in all these expressions: *Ekadhā api ekādaśadhā bhavati*.

If a superiority complex crops up in you because of any of these expressions, then you are not a real bhakta. Bhakti may lead to fanaticism or dogmatism if you forget this basic principle: that all these are simply forms of one and the same love for God. We see all these forms manifested in Sri Ramakrishna.

**83. Ityevam vadanti jana-  
jalpa-nirbhayāḥ ekamatāḥ  
kumāra-vyāsa-śuka-sāṇḍilya-garga-  
viṣṇu-kaunḍinya-śeṣoddhavāruṇi-  
bali-hanumad-vibhīṣaṇādayo  
bhaktyācāryāḥ.**

*Thus they declare unanimously the glory of bhakti, without fear of public criticism, the great teachers of bhakti: Kumara, Vyasa, Shuka, Shandilya, Garga, Vishnu, Kaundinya, Shesha, Uddhava, Aruni, Bali, Hanuman, Vibhishana, and others.*

This has been stated to strengthen conviction, because authenticity gives one-pointedness. Who are at the back of these instructions? Not x, y, or z, but the acharyas who say that bhakti is psychologically the most natural path. They are not the people who will suppress their views due to fear. Since they have

realized this truth, they are naturally fearless. Just as all who have eyes see a cow as a cow, so also all acharyas have the realization of the same truth.

**Look at the sky**, see who pervades it,  
uttering the words: 'I am He', 'I am He'.  
Let us see, but not with eyes,  
Him who is Formless.  
Let us drink in the delicious joy of this vision,  
but not with tongues.  
He is the Unknowable, the Deathless  
swinging high and low.  
The Lord of Narasaiya is omnipresent.  
The saints alone can catch Him  
in the web of their love.  
—Narasinha Mehta; trans. K M Munshi

**84. Ya idaṁ nārada-proktam  
śivānuśāsanam viśvasiti śraddhate  
sa bhaktimān bhavati saḥ preṣṭham  
labhate saḥ preṣṭham labhate.**

*Whosoever believes in this auspicious gospel of Narada, and has faith in it, becomes a lover of God and attains the highest beatitude and goal of life.*

*Nārada-proktam*: Narada has already stated the unanimity of view among the great acharyas. Thus, this *naradiya bhakti*, which Sri Ramakrishna has recommended, is universal in nature, bereft of dogmatism or narrowness. If you follow it, you will reach the nearest and dearest, *preṣṭham*, your own Reality. The sadhaka must have a doubtless conviction. This is expressed by the use of the words *viśvāsa* and *śraddhā*, faith and devotion. *Viśvāsa* means intuitive conviction; you must accept this philosophy with full understanding. But with *viśvāsa* you may follow your own reason; so, to negate this reaction, Narada says *śraddhā*, a loving faith in the words of the acharyas.

To counter another possible doubt—whether I shall reach the goal or not—Narada says: You are sure to reach the goal. There is no question of doubt. Proceed with doubtless unflinching conviction. ❧

# REVIEWS

For review in PRABUDDHA BHARATA,  
publishers need to send **two** copies of their latest publications.



## **Śrīṅgāraprakāśaḥ [Sāhityaprakāśaḥ] by Bhojarāja**

Eds. MM. Prof. Rewaprasada  
Dwivedi and  
Dr Sadashivakumara Dwivedi

Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts, Janpath, New Delhi, and Kalidasa Samsthana, 28 Mahamanapuri, Varanasi. 2007. 1630 pp + appendices. Rs 2400 (2 vols).

The twentieth century saw a renaissance in Sanskrit studies. Many lost works were rediscovered, rare manuscripts unearthed, theories reinterpreted, and critical editions brought out. The discovery of the manuscripts of *Shringaraprakasha* of Bhoja, around 1918, was an event of as much importance as the discovery of the manuscripts of Bhasa's plays in 1910. Mahamahopadhyaya Kuppaswami Shastri, a stalwart of Shastric learning of our times, initiated efforts to bring out the text of this monumental work around 1921–2. He rightly chose Dr V Raghavan, a worthy disciple of his, to carry out research on *Shringaraprakasha*. Raghavan's studies undoubtedly initiated a new era in our understanding of the entire history and tradition of literary theories in Sanskrit.

During the last two millennia *alamkara*, rhetoric, was developed in India by three schools, situated in three different geographical areas. The first school grew in Kashmir, where great philosophers gave it perspective and depth. The second school belongs to Dhar, Malwa, in Central India, and the third to Kanchi, South India. Bhoja is the worthiest representative of the Dhar School, and he also enjoys the pivotal position here. He evolved a new pattern evincing a synthetic approach. He systematized and reorganized the vast gamut of literary categories, concepts, and principles. Unfortunately, due to political turmoil, he could not take this task to its culmination, and even the manuscript of his magnum opus remained untraceable in the very territories where he ruled.

Josyer brought out a complete edition of *Shringaraprakasha* between 1955 and 1974, and Raghavan published the first volume of his edition, containing the

first fourteen chapters, from Madras in 1963. Josyer's edition contained a lot of lacunae and corrupt readings, and Raghavan's edition remains incomplete to this day, lacking the last twenty-two chapters.

In the galaxy of great acharyas, Bhoja, with his comprehensive and synthetic approach, displays a rare acumen for reorganization. There are thirty-six Prakashas, chapters, in this voluminous work. *Natyashastra* of Bharatamuni and *Kamasutra* of Vatsyayana also have thirty-six chapters each. At the very outset of his stupendous work, Bhoja starts with the definition of *vākya*, sentence, as a unit of discourse, with Sanskrit, Prakrit, and Apabhramsha as three of its media of expression. Sanskrit *vākyas* are of three types: (i) *śrauta*, related to the Vedas or Shruti; (ii) *ārṣa*, related to the rishis; and (iii) *laukika*, related to this world. The first category is further divided into two: *mantra* and *brāhmaṇa*. The units of discourse relating to the rishis are again of two types: *smṛti*, remembered revelations, and *purāṇa*, accounts of the past. *Kāvya*, poetry, and *śāstra*, teachings, are the units of discourse related to this world.

In this way Bhoja goes on to analyse the units of discourse in Prakrit and Apabhramsha too. Tools for the analysis of language are enumerated with detailed definitions and illustrations. The first eight chapters are devoted to grammar, forming a basis for rhetoric. The editors have modified the text to a certain extent to make it intelligible, especially in Prakasha Eight, without distorting the original framework. The sentences have been reorganized and lacunae filled by comparing the text with such works as *Vakyapadiya* that Bhoja refers to or reproduces. Professor Rewaprasad Dwivedi has also rewritten the whole of Prakasha Twenty-six, which could not be fully recovered, to suit the design as structured by Bhoja. The appendices of this edition are extremely valuable in eliciting the sources of Bhoja as they provide gleanings from texts like *Natyashastra* and *Vakyapadiya*.

*Shringaraprakasha* is a rich storehouse of Sanskrit and Prakrit verses. Bhoja has, as Professor Dwivedi informs us, quoted more than six hundred and fifty

verses from Kalidasa alone. The editors have provided immensely valuable material for researchers by listing these verses and their sources in the appendices. The publication of this complete edition of *Shringaraprakasha* is indeed a landmark in Sanskrit studies in modern India.

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New Delhi



### **Journey from Many to One** Swami Bhaskarananda

Viveka Press, 2716 Broadway Ave E,  
Seattle, Washington 98102-3909. 2009.  
Email: [vivekappress@vedanta-seattle.org](mailto:vivekappress@vedanta-seattle.org).  
xviii + 206 pp. \$15.95.

The title of this book is significant. For millennia the 'many' has enamoured and deluded humans with a superficial vision. The 'many' has an inexhaustible power that throws up or evolves into the variegated universe with its living and non-living elements. The non-living become living and the living become non-living.

Philosophers and mystics, scientists and poets, artists and musicians have been penetrating through the surface layers, drilling them with their minds and hearts, insight and intelligence, down the ages. Advaita Vedanta has long succeeded in plumbing these depths and arriving at the 'One', the support, the background, the source.

Advaita metaphysics has spawned a vast literature. It has been rigorously worked out from diverse angles by different philosophers and saints through the centuries. Many primers have also been written to explain the essential doctrine lucidly and instruct the uninitiated. In this book the author has taken some of the salient concepts encapsulated in these primers and has admirably translated them into a contemporary idiom. Concepts like 'Brahman', 'Atman', 'maya', and 'mukti' have been dealt with using illustrations and examples.

The book is written primarily for readers who, though having had a modern education, do not have the skills to peruse the original Sanskrit texts. The exhaustive index and adequate glossary should prove especially helpful. This text should arouse sincere interest and longing in people with competence to commence the 'journey from many to One'. The book is also a journey in itself.

*Swami Satyamayananda*

Acharya, Probationers' Training Centre, Belur



### **The Perennial Values of Indian Culture**

A Collection of  
Surrendra Paul Lectures

Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture,  
Gol Park, Kolkata 700 029. E-mail:  
[rmic@vsnl.com](mailto:rmic@vsnl.com). 2008. 239 pp. Rs 125.

'*Amritam visha-samsrishtam*, nectar mixed with poison,' says Sita Devi on receiving Rama's signet ring from Hanuman. One cannot forget the cruel manner in which a life that promised still greater services for the sustenance of Indian culture was removed from this earth by an armed insurgency. But the insurgents could not remove Surrendra Paul's commitment to Indian culture that had percolated into his family. The Surrendra Paul Chair for Indo-logical Studies and Research was born in 1991.

The annual lectures delivered so far have been brought together in this volume. Some are summaries; others complete texts. Each one of the lecturers has been an achiever in his field. Among them is Surrendra Paul's brother Swaraj Paul, speaking on 'Indian Values in the 21st Century', a striking analysis of what is, what should be, and how one should attain it. When he says 'our tradition has always been community-oriented', he says it all. We need to reiterate traditional values tirelessly: 'The one responsibility of wealth which seems the most difficult to accept is that of self-restraint. Wealth can impart arrogance, and arrogance combined with the power of wealth can become a social menace. Unfortunately, restraint is not born in us, it must be taught by example. This is where we all have a responsibility to uphold our traditional moral values.'

And what are they? One phrase gets repeated in several lectures: *vasudhaiva kutumbakam*, the whole world is a family. The speakers try to relate the wisdom of the distant past with the exigencies of the modern world, which is bound to technological advancement and business culture. Tapan Ray Choudhuri takes us to nineteenth-century Bengal to show how the Western breeze effected some changes in the religious make-up of the elite, though the culture that had developed for centuries triumphed in the end. The Vaishnava emotionalism that crept into the Brahmo prayer meetings is cited as an example. After all, Ramakrishna Paramahansa coming in the tradition of Indian saints 'spoke in the language of the people virtually untouched by the colonial experience'. N V C Swamy presents a cluster of choice

quotes to show how science and spirituality seek to answer the truth about Existence.

Nrusingh Charan Panda and R K Dasgupta have scholarly papers on Indian philosophy and the journey of the Bhagavadgita to the West. Satkari Mukhopadhyaya takes an unfading subject, the Ramayana. Valmiki's epic in Myanmar gets a Buddhist tinge—Ramavastu; in Malaysia, the shades are drawn from Islam, since Ravana is made a supreme emperor by Allah through Adam; the Thai people adore their Ramkien; in Kampuchea, Rama is a bodhisattva; and Indonesia is rich in ancient sculptures depicting episodes from the Ramayana.

The subjects in this book have not been tailored just to suit the term 'culture' in its aspect as tradition. There is wide freedom, and what is happening *now* is, after all, an input for the Indian culture that is alive and is on a futurist mode. So we have motivating titles like 'Advanced Health Care for All', by R D Lele; 'Science in India', by A P Mitra; and 'Civil Society and Its Transformation in India: From Citizen to Beneficiary', by Dipankar Gupta. These lectures present comprehensible information on specialized subjects.

As for the future of India and of humanity, we have a striking story from Manoj Das, quoted by Indranath Chaudhuri in his 'Indianness and Contemporary India': 'Sir, look at that pool yonder and see how a beautiful lotus has emerged out of the mud, with the intervention of sunlight from above. There is nothing surprising in it. Man can grow into something splendid with the descent of grace from above.'

*Dr Prema Nandakumar*  
Researcher and Literary Critic  
Srirangam



### ***Spiritual Life for Modern Times***

Swami Vireswarananda

Ramakrishna Math, Mylapore, Chennai  
600 004. E-mail: [srkmath@vsnl.com](mailto:srkmath@vsnl.com).  
2008. vi + 194 pp. Rs 45.

The contents of this book are garnered from the writings and addresses of Swami Vireswarananda, the tenth president of the Ramakrishna Order. He portrays scepticism, lack of faith, and antagonism between the world's religions, as well as the stranglehold of reason and science, as the greatest threats humanity faces in modern times. He also remarks

that only a religion that is scientific in nature and is at the same time responsive to human needs can appeal to modern minds. Herein lies the further relevance of the lives and message of Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and Sri Sarada Devi, which give fresh momentum and motivation in confronting present challenges—emphasizes Swami Vireswarananda.

In the course of his lectures, the swami dwells at length on the twin ideals of 'self-realization' and 'service to humanity' as envisioned by Sri Ramakrishna and actualized by Swami Vivekananda. The swami also articulates the remedial measures for national integration as suggested by Swami Vivekananda as well as such subjects as the importance and methods of spiritual practice, divine grace and self-effort, meditation, the need for synthesis of the four yogas in the life of a spiritual seeker, and the message of the Bhagavadgita. He presents Sri Sarada Devi, whose life was charged with spirituality, as the role model for modern women. The lectures are interspersed with appropriate anecdotes and examples that add to the lucidity of the exposition.

The book is a treasure chest of spiritual inspiration for contemporary men and women. Though nominally priced, it encapsulates priceless ideas.

*Dr Chetana Mandavia*  
Professor of Plant Physiology  
Junagadh Agricultural University, Junagadh

## BOOKS RECEIVED



### ***Thiruppavai***

Vengrai V Parthasarathy

Ramakrishna Math, Chennai. 2008.  
xviii + 78 pp. Rs 20.

Original Tamil text of Andal's classic with transliteration, English translation, and brief annotations.



### ***Yogataaraavali of Adisankaracharya***

Comm. KV Krishna Murthy;  
trans. Dr Vemuri Ramesam

Institute of Scientific Research on Vedas,  
11-13-279, Rd 8, Alakapuri, Hyderabad  
500 035. E-mail: [vedakavi@serveveda.org](mailto:vedakavi@serveveda.org).  
2007. xviii + 158 pp.



# REPORTS



*The Vidyarthi Vrata, students' vow ceremony, at Veda Vidyalaya*



*Srimat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj inaugurating a new annex to the Veda Vidyalaya at Belur Math*

## **Durga Puja**

The autumnal Durga Puja was celebrated at Belur Math from 25 to 28 September with all solemnity. Cooked prasada was served to about 90,000 devotees during the four days, and on the Ashtami day the number was nearly 43,000. The following 24 centres also performed Durga Puja in consecrated images: Antpur, Asansol, Barasat, Contai, Cooch Behar, Dhaleswar (under Agartala), Ghatshila, Guwahati, Jalpaiguri, Jamshedpur, Jayrambati, Kamarpukur, Karimganj, Lucknow, Malda, Medinipur, Mumbai, Patna, Port Blair, Rahara, Shella (under Cherrapunji), Shillong, Silchar, and Varanasi Advaita Ashrama.

## **News from Branch Centres**

Srimat Swami Atmasthanandaji Maharaj, President, Ramakrishna Math and Ramakrishna Mission, inaugurated a newly-built annex to the **Veda Vidyalaya** at **Belur Math** on 13 August 2009.

The newly-built first floor on the north block of the school at **Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Ramharipur**, was declared open on 19 August.

## **Relief**

**Flood Relief** • Some parts of West Bengal were flooded last month owing to heavy rainfall and release of water by Damodar Valley Corporation. Our centres immediately started relief operations in the affected areas by distributing relief materials. **Antpur**: 32,650 kg chira, 3,215 kg sugar, 394 kg biscuits, 600,000 halogen tablets, and 22 bales of used garments to 18,993 families of 51 villages in Jangipara, Khanakul I & II, and Pursurah blocks in Hooghly district, and Udaynarayanpur block in Howrah district. **Ichapur**: 48,175 kg chira, 2,101 kg sugar, 30 kg gur, 722 kg biscuits, 500,000 halogen tablets, and 450 kg bleaching powder to 18,104 families of 67 villages in Khanakul I & II blocks. **Kamarpukur**: 24,900 kg chira, 3,901 kg sugar, 400 kg biscuits,

and 250,000 halogen tablets to 17,982 families of 22 villages in Khanakul II block. Besides, the centre disinfected some areas in the mentioned block using 450 kg bleaching powder and 1,800 kg lime dust. **Saradapitha**: 20,000 kg chira, 2,000 kg sugar, 400 kg biscuits, and 200,000 halogen tablets to 5,663 families of 22 villages in Amta II and Udaynarayanpur blocks in Howrah district.

**Cyclone Aila Relief** • Centres in West Bengal continued relief operations among the victims of the Aila Cyclone by providing relief materials. **Belgharia**: 987 saris, 1,020 dhotis, 1,053 mosquito-nets, and 772 books to 1,334 families of 3 villages in Gosaba block, South 24-Parganas district. **Saradapitha**: 2,800 kg rice to 486 families of 9 villages in Hingalganj block, North 24-Parganas district. **Sikra Kulingram**: 300 kg chira, 292 kg sugar, 52 kg muri, 21 kg batasa, 14 kg flour, 2 cartons of cakes, 853 l mineral water, 500 saris, 150 dhotis, 10 blankets, 325 kg bleaching powder, 125 l phenyl, and 50 bottles of Dettol to cyclone victims of Sandeshkhali I and II blocks in North 24-Parganas district.

**Distress Relief** • The following centres distributed various items to the needy in their respective areas: **Agartala**: 590 saris, 150 dhotis, and 200 sets of children's garments; **Baranagar Math**: 312 saris, 33 dhotis, and 128 children's garments; **Belgharia**: 147 saris, 266 dhotis, 152 lungis, 306 shirts, 69 pants, and 148 assorted garments; **Karimganj**: 405 saris and 180 dhotis; **Shyamla Tal**: 20,000 notebooks, 550 pens, 550 pencils, 550 erasers, 100 geometry boxes, 20 school uniforms, 20 pairs of shoes, and 25 umbrellas.

**Economic Rehabilitation** • Last month, under the self-employment programme, **Cooch Behar** and **Khetri** centres distributed 19 rickshaws and 10 sewing machines respectively to needy people.

**Pilgrimage Service** • **Deoghar** centre distributed 5,000 l of drinking water every day to devotees during the Shravani Mela from 8 July to 5 August. The centre also treated 703 patients in the medical camp organized on this occasion.



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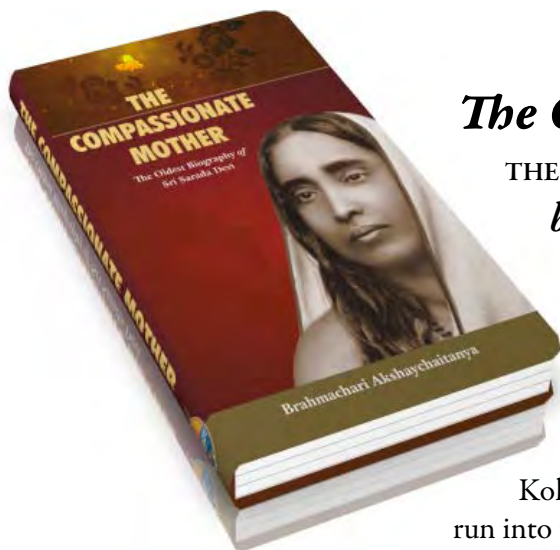
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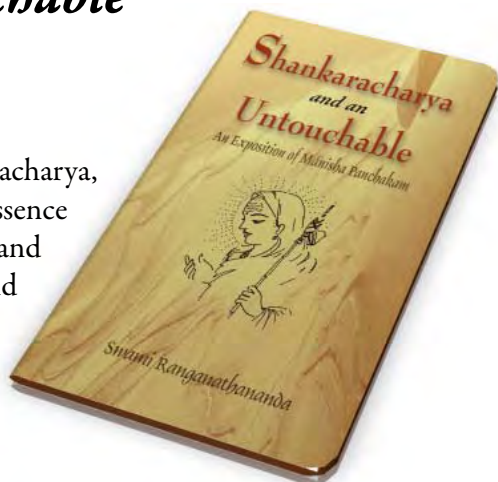
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